SHOOTOUT: GPzS vs. INTERCEPTORS

CYCLE GUIDE

TESTS:

Honda VF500F, VF750F, VF1000F,
Kawasaki GPz550, GPz750, GPz1100,
Can-Am Sonic 560MX,
Honda ATC250R vs. Kawasaki Tecate

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Contents

VOL. 18 NO. 5 MAY 1984

FAMILY FEUD

20 HONDA INTERCEPTORS vs. KAWASAKI GPzs *two coats of arms get up in arms*—**by Larry Works**

22 BATTLE OF THE BOLTS *lined up Four inspection*—**by Paul Dean**

25 VF1000F vs. GPz1100 *horsepower isn't enough anymore*—**by Paul Dean**

31 VF750F vs. GPz750 *honor-roll roadsters*—**by Paul Dean**

34 VF500F vs. GPz550 *did the best Interceptor land on target?* —**by Larry Works**

37 THE BOTTOM FAMILY LINE *whose blood is thicker?*—**by Larry Works**

TESTS

64 KAWASAKI NINJA *hit bike for hire*—**by Charles Everitt**

74 HONDA VF1000F INTERCEPTOR vs. KAWASAKI NINJA *can Kawasaki assassinate Honda's top missilebike?*—**by Charles Everitt**

80 HONDA ATC250R vs. KAWASAKI TECATE ATV *three for all* —**by Ron Lawson**

84 CAN-AM SONIC MX *the great white lie*—**by Ron Lawson**

PRODUCT EVALUATIONS

76 K-V DYNA RPM LIMITER *take it to the limit—but not beyond* —**by Jim Miller**

78 HONDALINE SPORT LEATHERS *designer hide*—**by Jim Miller**

GUIDE LINES

47 COMING SOON *on up the road*

58 BOOK REVIEW: *Superstars of Speedway*

60 RUMORS *on up the road and over the horizon*

SPORT LINES

87 PARIS TO DAKAR *Germany recaptures North Africa*

98 PIT BITS *all the dirt from the track*

106 WINNERS & LOSERS *the coming year in hindsight*

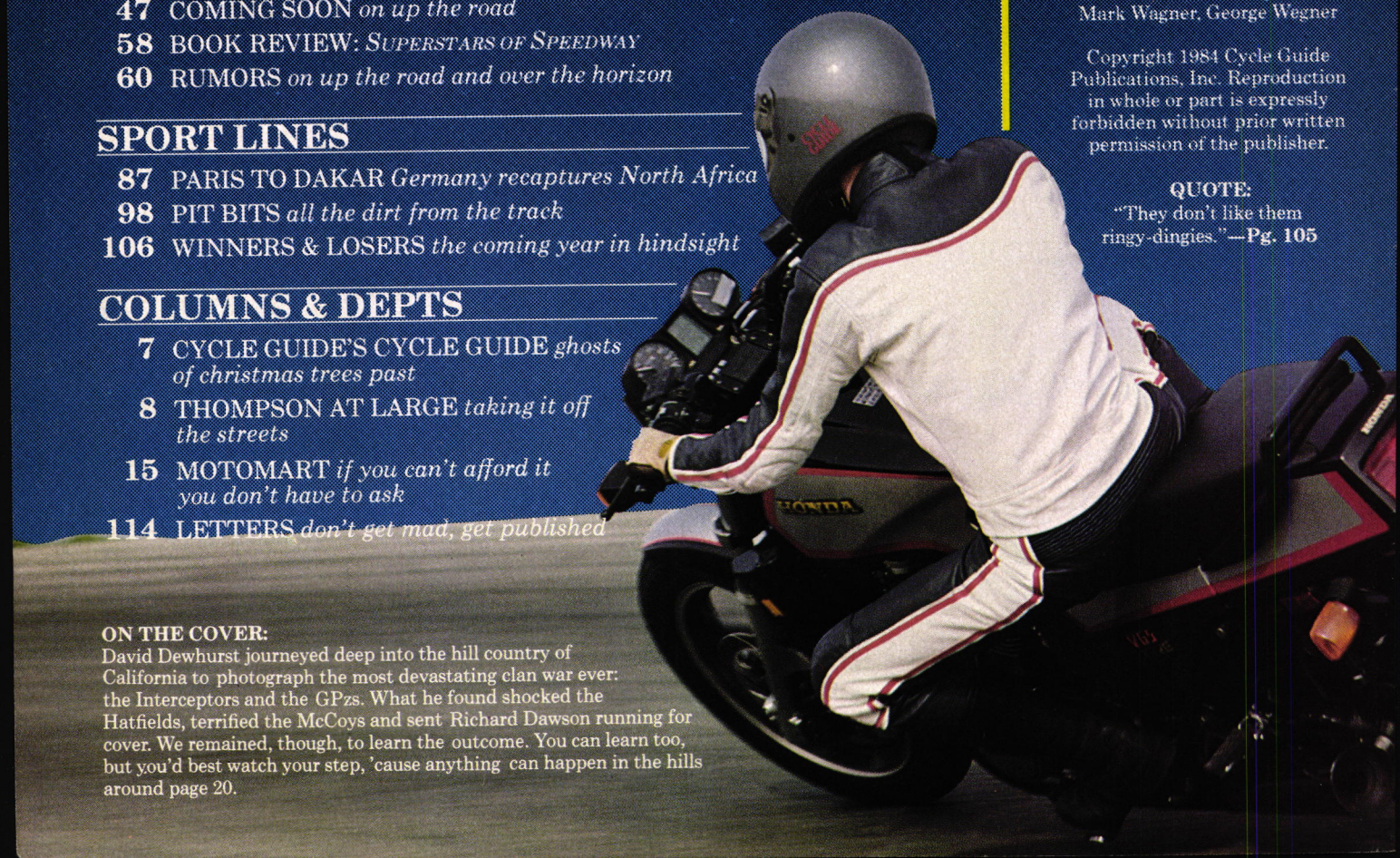
COLUMNS & DEPTS

7 CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE *ghosts of christmas trees past*

8 THOMPSON AT LARGE *taking it off the streets*

15 MOTOMART *if you can't afford it you don't have to ask*

114 LETTERS *don't get mad, get published*



ON THE COVER:
David Dewhurst journeyed deep into the hill country of California to photograph the most devastating clan war ever: the Interceptors and the GPzs. What he found shocked the Hatfields, terrified the McCoys and sent Richard Dawson running for cover. We remained, though, to learn the outcome. You can learn too, but you'd best watch your step, 'cause anything can happen in the hills around page 20.

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QUOTE:
"They don't like them ringy-dingies."—**Pg. 105**

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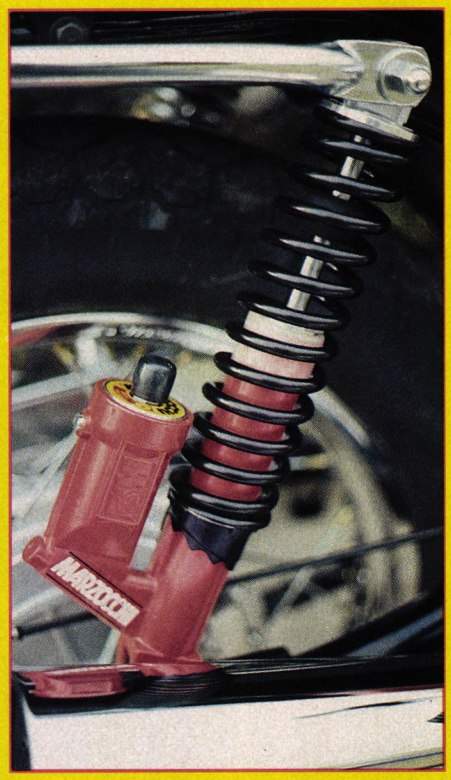

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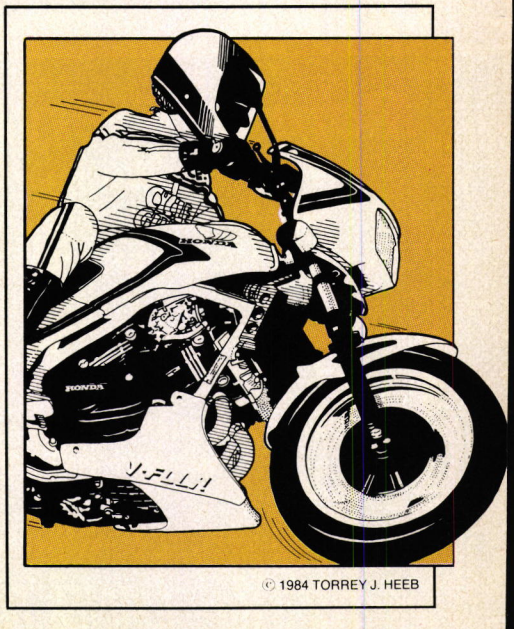

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CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE

Cycle Guide's catalog of recent test hardware—no brag, just fact

OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Cagiva WMX250-'84	January '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.7	221	28.0/4.65	6
Can-Am Sonic MX-'83	January '83	Motocross	Four-stroke	11.6/12.1	272	28.0/4.24	5
Honda ATC200X-'83	August '83	ATV	Four-stroke	7.2/6.2	285	N/A	5
Honda ATC250R-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.8/8.0	311	N/A	5
Honda CR125R-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.3	195	27.2/4.29	6
Honda CR250R-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	216	26.7/4.13	5
Honda CR480R-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	12.0/12.3	226	26.0/3.86	5
Honda XR350R-'83	June '83	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.9/10.4	253	26.0/3.94	6
Honda XR500R-'83	October '83	Desert	Four-stroke	11.0/12.2	278	25.5/3.94	5
Husqvarna 250 CR-'83	January '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.7	227	30.0/5.51	6
Husqvarna 430 WR-'83	June '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.4/10.6	246	30.0/5.98	6
Husqvarna 500 CR-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.8	240	30.0/5.51	4
Husqvarna 500 XC-'83	October '83	Desert	Two-stroke	11.7/12.8	245	30.0/5.98	6
Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.6/8.2	319	N/A	5
Kawasaki KDX200-'83	July '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	9.8/11.0	213	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KDX250-'83	November '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.1/10.7	232	29.0/5.00	6
Kawasaki KX125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	195	27.5/4.57	6
Kawasaki KX250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	220	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
KTM MC 495-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.4	249	28.0/4.21	4
Maico 490 Sand Spider-'83	October '83	Desert	Two-stroke	12.0/12.7	243	27.0/4.72	5
Maico 490 Spider-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.2	240	27.0/4.72	4
Suzuki ALT50-'83	June '83	ATV	Two-stroke	N/A	90	N/A	1
Suzuki RM125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.5/12.4	190	29.5/4.84	6
Suzuki RM250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.9	220	27.8/4.41	5
Suzuki RM500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.8	234	29.7/4.84	4
Yamaha IT250-'83	November '83	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.0/11.3	233	28.0/4.65	6
Yamaha TT600K-'83	August '83	Trail	Four-stroke	11.7/10.8	280	28.0/4.65	5
Yamaha YZ125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.3	194	27.7/4.57	6
Yamaha YZ250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.6	214	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	227	28.5/4.72	4

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW R100RS-'84	March '84	2C/G	979.9	13.172/100.11	125	495	27–50	148
H-D FXRS Low Glide-'84	January '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	13.917/94.57	112	575	38–48	140
H-D FXRT Sport Glide-'84	March '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	13.928/93.65	112	639	34–61	140
H-D FLTC Tour Glide-'84	March '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	14.603/88.75	107	774	39–54	152
H-D XLS Roadster-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.842/93.94	106	515	43–55	138
H-D XLX-61-'83	June '83	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.459/95.94	106	488	40–72	128
Honda CX650 Custom-'83	May '83	80 deg. 2E/G	673.5	12.560/102.97	119	454	38–48	124
Honda CX650 Turbo-'83	March '83	80 deg. 2E/G	673.5	12.093/111.66	137†	538	25–44	124
Honda GL1200A Aspencade-'84	March '84	4C/G	1181.9	13.156/98.14	118	744	33–46	141
Honda Nighthawk 550-'83	July '83	4A/G	572.3	12.461/102.97	114	429	37–49	125
Honda Nighthawk 650-'83	December '82	4A/G	656.0	12.287/108.04	122	451	29–51	127
Honda Nighthawk S-'84	February '84	4A/G	696.7	12.048/109.75	125	492	28–45	125
Honda VF500F Interceptor-'84	May '84	90 deg. 4D/F	497.6	12.417/107.65	127	419	33–48	123
Honda VF750F Interceptor-'84	May '84	90 deg. 4D/F	748.1	11.890/114.64	140	511	23–39	127
Honda VF1000F Interceptor-'84	May '84	90 deg. 4D/F	998.4	11.121/123.45	150	536	23–45	125
Honda V45 Sabre- '83	September '83	90 deg. 4D/G	748.1	12.179/111.11	128	514	33–46	130
Honda VF400F-'83	September '83	90 deg. 4D/F	399.1	13.588/96.35	112	402	34–51	127
Honda VT500 Ascot-'83	October '83	52 deg. 2D/G	490.9	13.628/93.75	112	411	41–61	129
Honda VT750C Shadow-'83	April '83	45 deg. 2D/G	749.6	12.906/100.78	127	484	48–55	132
Kawasaki GPz550-'84	May '84	4A/F	553.8	12.559/105.38	125	436	32–56	136
Kawasaki GPz750-'84	May '84	4A/F	739.0	12.114/110.97	135	502	37–47	120
Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo-'83	July '83	4A/F	739.0	11.225/123.53	146	514	N/A	N/A
Kawasaki GPz1100-'84	May '84	4A/F	1089.9	11.312/120.80	145	560	24–48	120
Kawasaki KZ550 Spectre-'83	May '83	4A/G	553.8	13.348/96.77	116†	441	44–56	137
Kawasaki KZ750-L3-'83	January '83	4A/F	739.0	12.095/108.95	134†	487	47–53	132
Kawasaki Ninja-'84	May '84	4A/F	908.2	11.181/123.62	146	523	24–44	126
Kawasaki Voyager-'84	March '84	6A/G	1286.1	13.346/97.61	116	882	28–44	142
Laverda RGS 1000-'84	December '83	3A/F	980.8	12.565/106.50	130	556	25–40	140
Suzuki GS450E-'83	January '83	2A/F	448.2	14.236/93.16	106†	384	39–49	131
Suzuki GS450G Automatic-'83	February '83	2A/G	448.2	16.412/82.34	94†	410	36–59	143
Suzuki GS550E-'83	June '83	4A/F	572.3	12.593/104.04	120	443	39–47	135
Suzuki GS650M Katana-'83	November '83	4A/G	673.9	13.238/101.01	122†	491	49–60	137
Suzuki GS750E-'83	August '83	4A/F	747.4	11.893/112.92	131†	485	35–50	135
Suzuki XN85 Turbo-'83	March '83	4A/F	673.9	12.381/107.14	132†	521	34–46	120
Yamaha RZ350-'83	December '83	2A/F††	347.4	13.343/98.46	112	346	N/A	N/A
Yamaha XJ650 Turbo-'83	March '83	4A/G	653.4	13.059/103.32	126†	543	35–53	126
Yamaha XJ900 Seca-'83	September '83	4A/G	853.2	11.949/113.20	128	499	34–58	135
Yamaha XZ550R Vision-'83	November '83	70 deg. 2D/G	552.9	13.422/95.23	112	483	39–47	124
Yamaha 920 Virago-'83	April '83	75 deg. 2D/G	920.0	12.835/101.46	108	503	38–45	138
Yamaha Venture Royale-'84	March '84	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	12.759/101.46	124	752	37–53	137

***A**-Transverse Vertical, **B**-Vertical (single-cylinder only), **C**-Horizontally Opposed, **D**-Tandem Vee, **E**-Transverse Vee, **F**-Chain Final Drive, **G**-Shaft Final Drive, **H**-Belt Final Drive

† indicates a calculated top speed; †† indicates a two-stroke engine

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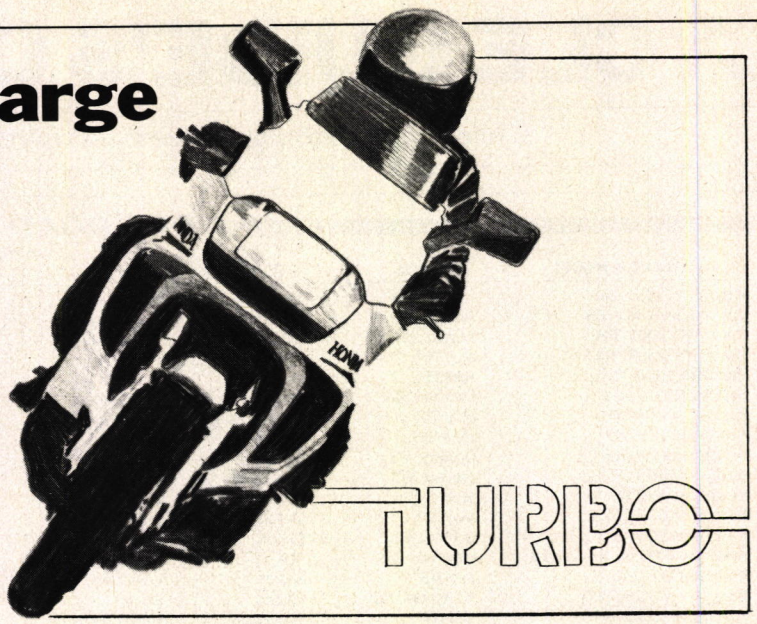
Thompson at Large

Sunday Rides

Beyond the back road.



• Let's say you're a rider who likes to lean. Your personal Tilt-O-Meter only tickles when you crank past the limits most folks set for themselves. You think of yourself as an expert rider; not a wild wrist, but canny. You enjoy reading the road ahead, enjoy its challenges and rewards for the right line well executed. For years, you opted for machinery most people considered (incorrectly) as café racers. Laverdas. Moto Guzzies. Ducatis. BMWs. Your turn-key-touring pals tried to turn your riding tastes into something they could understand by labelling it "sport-touring," but that wasn't quite right, since you never really rode to get anywhere so much as to savor the road. And your colleagues of the holeshot genus could only understand your solo jaunts through the countryside as some kind of test of wills with the local constabulary and the oncoming Winnebagos.

You know, of course, that none of these categories quite fit. But you never argued, and life went on pretty much as usual; you got better each year, the Europeans built slightly better and more expensive equipment for you each year, and that was that.

But the game has changed. Your game, that is. Out of absolutely nowhere, the Japanese have handed you a challenge and an opportunity you can only pass up if you're more of a hidebound traditionalist than you like to think yourself.

They did it with motorcycles, of course. Motorcycles like the Honda VF750F, the Kawasaki Ninja, Suzuki GS1150 and Yamaha RD500. Motorcycles that fit only into one category: sportbikes. Motorcycles that take up in acceleration, braking, roadholding, stability and pure speed where their role models from Europe trailed off. These devices are not café racers, but machines whose capabilities far exceed the limits of most of their riders, and whose potential is almost impossible to probe on any American road. And therein lies both the challenge and the opportunity.

First, the opportunity. It comes from the "sport" part of "sportbike." In an era when it's all too common to sling words carelessly, consider the meaning of this one with the kind of attention you give to fine wine. Roll the word around in your mind. If you've experienced any of these bikes, you'll know that however fine the ride you got on your favorite backroad, it wasn't real sport. And if you've endured the frustration of running up against the legal and safety barriers to full utilization of your skill and the bike's awesome capabilities, you will inevitably have considered the alternative: the racetrack.

Bingo. It's the right alternative, the proper place to experience the sport in these motorcycles. But you won't need to emulate the frenzied antics of the points-chasers to enjoy it. Instead, take as your role model the sportscar racer of the Fifties.

For a brief period, the gentleman amateur was king in American sportscar roadracing. He bought his Jaguar XK120, taped over the lights, applied charmingly awkward numbers to his doors and went racing. He did not delude himself that he was Fangio or Moss. He simply enjoyed exploring the limits of himself and his machine on a fine Sunday afternoon. He made good friends, shared the sport and got on with his life. It was a kind of Belle Epoque in racing, soon overtaken with the ferocious demands of "serious" racing, and the gentlemen racers were scorned by their successors, who now spend minor fortunes outfitting racecars whose technology is laughable compared with the device you can buy at your local bike store for the price of their trailers. You can, in effect, combine what the inheritors of the Fifties' car racers have lost with what they will never have.

Then there is the challenge. Put bluntly, it involves your self-esteem, your courage and your honesty. The Big Four have delivered to America's showrooms motorcycles far better than almost all the riders who will buy them. A racetrack will demonstrate that in a way no backroad can; there is always an excuse—usually valid—for not using every inch of lean on Route 35. But what about Turn Nine? There, since the Japanese have built the bikes of which sport-riders' dreams are made, the limit isn't tires anymore; it is the rider himself.

Most people will ignore both the challenge and the opportunity, and it's a shame. Conditions have never been better for fully exploring the fun of going fast safely; a coast-to-coast network of clubs and associations puts on races involving a vast array of classes, so that any sportbike fits in somewhere. Further, preparing the bike need not be a week-long exercise in futility, again because the designers have done so well. Yesterday's "production racers" seem faintly ludicrous next to the likes of a Ninja. Add number plates, some lockwiring and duct tape, strip stands and signals, and you're ready. A night's work, and work that need not be wallet-breaking, either. If you go at this for the fun, rather than the glory, it need be no more expensive than a season's skiing.

On the other hand, pitching that Ninja on its side through Turn Nine can be a lot more painful than bungling a mogul at Squaw Valley. Nobody likes to watch five grand worth of hardware high-side into oblivion. But this is where you need honesty; do you not take this chance every time you tickle your Tilt-O-Meter on Route 35, adding to the simple slide the chance for collecting a Winnebago grille?

It's a moot point; and really, the reason for regarding the racetrack as the right venue for fully savoring an Interceptor's abilities is not simply safety but that so-elusive word, sport. The Japanese have put the sport into the bikes and the bikes into every showroom. The rest is up to you. —*Steve Thompson*

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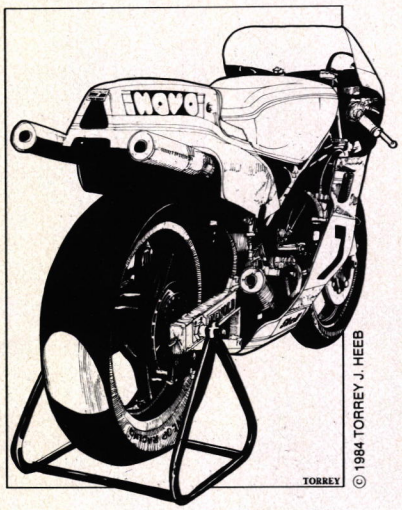
WISHBOOK

Cycle Guide's minutes from the last meeting of the Council of Motorcycle Futurethink

The proportion of a motorcycle's power used to push it through the air increases dramatically with speed. Therefore, it seems far more sensible to forget the horsepower wars, with their complexity, expense and added weight, and concentrate instead on developing more aerodynamic motorcycles. A good slippery bike would combine the best of all possible worlds; exceptional fuel economy and stability, along with comfort and substantial top speed, all from a lightweight, easy-handling machine. Now that's what I'd call real high technology!

Geoffrey James
Bloomington, Indiana



You would think with all this so-called advanced technology designed to decrease poundage that the manufacturers would actually offer us some lightweight motorcycles. Instead what do we have? 550s that weigh more than the 650s of two decades ago, superbikes that feel like tourers and tourers that tip the scales at almost a ton. The focus of progress is all wrong. The manufacturers are developing an aluminum swingarm that saves a pound or two here, then they cancel the advantage with a brace of carburetors and cylinders, radiators and anti-dive units! Let's get down to basics: Light is right, even at the expense of a lot of techno-trickery.

Don Williams
Bramalea, Ontario
Canada

I admit I'm impressed with the number and sophistication of the cruisers and sportbikes the manufacturers offer these days, but they seem to have completely forgotten about the average rider in the rush to nail down those market extremes. I don't like a cruiser's laid-back seating position, and the Jumping-Jack-Flash sportbikes seem to promise more than I can deliver. What happened to the less-specialized motorcycles, the general-purpose bikes for those of us who do other things than prowl the boulevards or rampage through the backroads?

Kent Middleton
Atlanta, Georgia

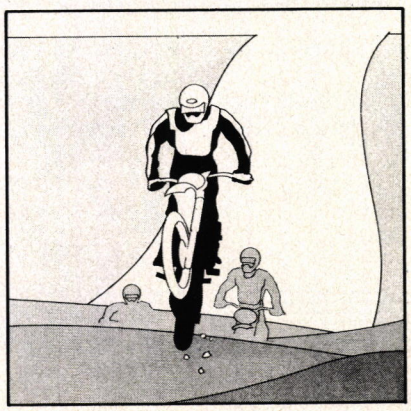
So, once again the rest of the world gets an incredible motorcycle that we can only drool over. I'm talking about Yamaha's RD500LC, the closest thing going to Kenny Roberts' GP bike, and the motorcycle Yamaha has declared off-limits for the U.S.A.

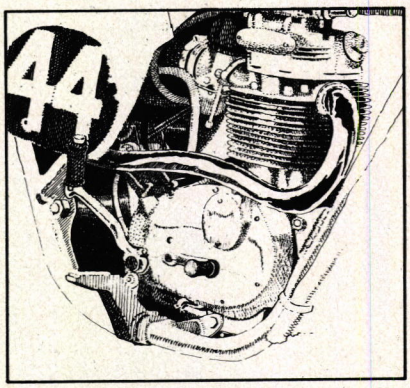
Yamaha already has proven that it can make a street-legal two-stroke for this country; just witness the RZ350LC that's being imported this year. Why not, then, make use of that technology and let us have the same opportunity as the rest of the world; namely, to ride the ultimate sportbike.

Roger Snelson
Houston, Texas

I know it's been said before, but why can't Harley-Davidson build a real street-legal XR750? I'm not talking about something like the XR1000, but a real, honest to God, 400-lb. repliracer. Seems to me that an EPA-legal version should be able to put out an easy 75 horsepower, and with a decent suspension ought to show a GPz, Interceptor or Ducati its taillights on a twisty road. People have been grumbling about buying American for ten years now, but when Harley misses a bet like that, why should hey?

Jack Arnold
Joplin, Missouri





Well, looking at the Japanese lineups for '84, it looks like the Turbo Age is over. But I think the Japanese lost out by not building a midsize turbocharged touring bike. This would give you the best of both worlds: good fuel economy for cruising, and plenty of power for passing. Weight and turbo lag aren't so critical on touring machines, so the two biggest problems with turbo-sportbikes aren't even a factor. I can't help but think that something like a turbocharged Silver Wing or Vision would've really een great.ql

Jon Haber
Romulus, Michigan

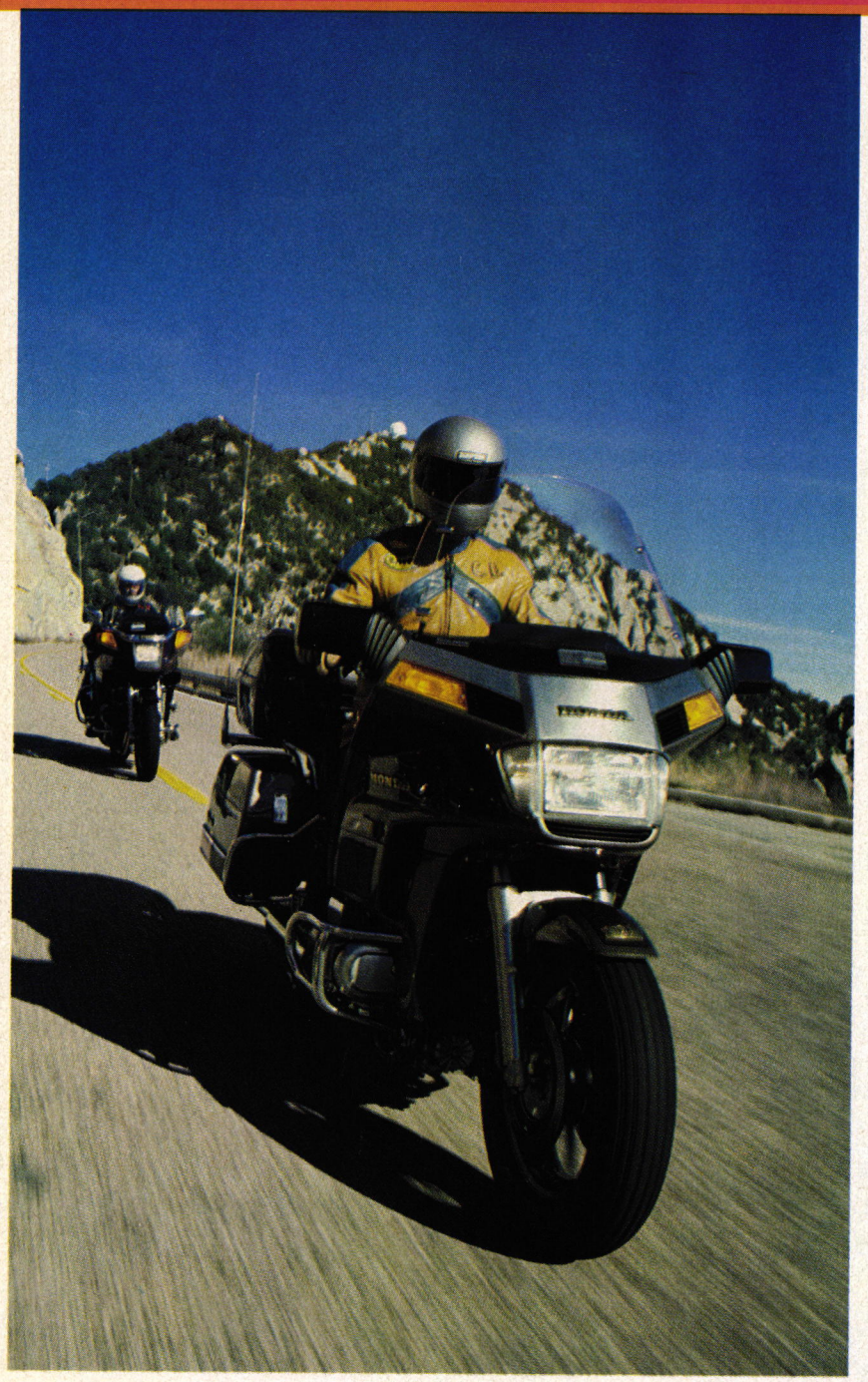
I know right off what kind of a motorcycle I want. One with controls that are adjustable enough so that I can really fit the bike to me. Instead, what I see in dealerships these days are bikes that are going just the opposite direction. More and more bikes are coming with humped seats that stick you in one place, and with separate, fixed handlebars that you can't adjust or even replace. I can't afford to replace my motorcycle every year, but I figure with a bike that was tailored for me, I'd still have a bike that wasn't like anyone else's.

Mark Smithers
Yonkers, New York

The kind of bike I'd wish for is really simple. I want a midsize Japanese transverse-four that isn't going to change much from year to year. Sort of like a Checker with two wheels. Did you ever try to buy parts from a dealer for a bike that's a few years out of date? I know that the manufacturers have to change the bikes constantly so that you have to buy parts from them, but if the bike didn't change much, the parts would be cheaper and easier to get.

William Robinson
Albuquerque, New Mexico

KONI
ADJUSTABLE SHOCKS



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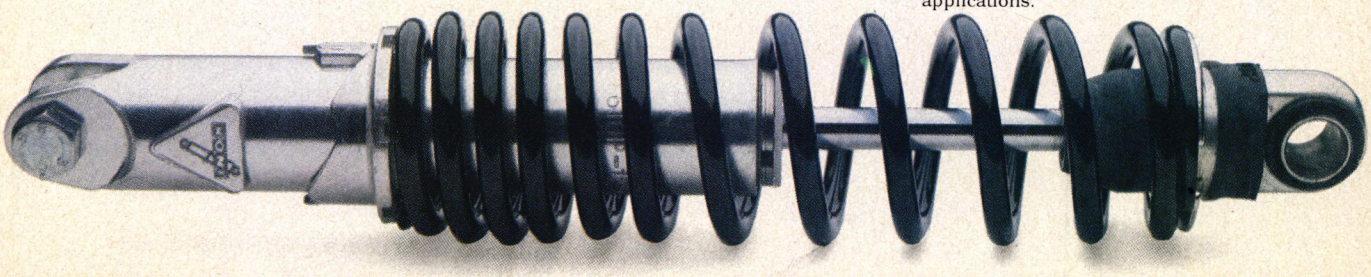

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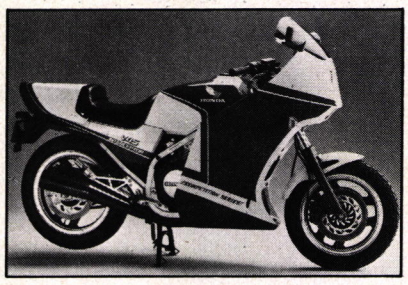
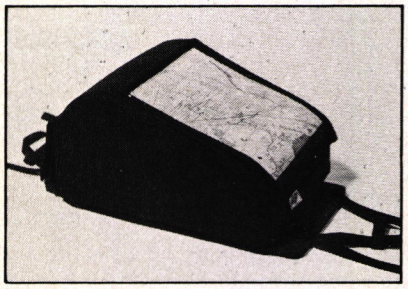
Get A Grip On: The latest addition to Ancra's extensive line of tiedowns is the "Power Grip," a budget pair of tiedowns with many of the features of more expensive setups. The Power Grip consists of two tiedowns with quick-release buckles attached to strips of 1800-pound test nylon webbing. A vinyl-coated hook on each tiedown prevents marring of your payload's finish. The Power Grip retails for $12.95 through motorcycle dealerships, or from the Ancra Corporation, Dept. CG, 2233 East Grand Av., El Segundo, California 90245.

A Touch Of Glass: If you're tired of your Interceptor looking like every other Interceptor on the road, Lockhart can spice up its looks with its new Competition Series Fast Glass sport fairing. The two-piece, color-matched windbreaker is said to improve the aerodynamic efficiency of the bike, while providing good wind protection for the chest, hands and legs. The fairing's fiberglass panels slip around the VF750F's instruments and fuel tank without modifying the bike, and the Fast Glass kit comes complete with a smoked windscreen, mirrors, rubber trim and all mounting hardware. The fairing sells for $549.95 from Lockhart, Dept. CG, 15717 Texaco Ave., Paramount, California 90723.



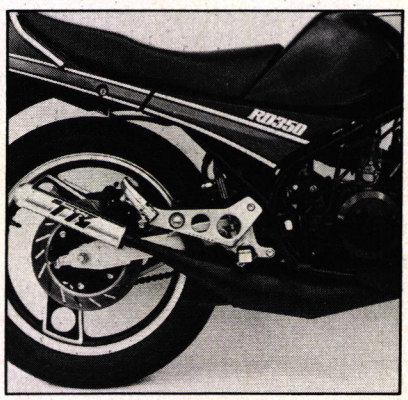
From The Boiler Room: Temp-Guard's new coolant/anti-freeze is the first such mixture designed specifically for use in alloy motorcycle engines. According to the manufacturer, the coolant inhibits the formation of bubbles and air pockets that can cause hot spots in a bike's cooling system. Temp-Guard is available in quart bottles through motorcycle dealerships, and retails for $3.95 per jug.

Tank Top Trunk: Rev-Pack's new tankbag is designed for sport-touring riders who want convenience and additional load-carrying capacity without the lumpish looks of some traditional bags. This streamlined bag rides on a washable foam pad anchored by nylon webbing that's clipped to the frame with a pair of quick-release buckles. The bag itself is made of cordura nylon that's bonded to a waterproof vinyl liner, for weather-protection and easy cleaning. Rev-Pack's map window covers a single zipper down the center of the bag, allowing easy access to stowaway items. The tankbag sells for $59.95 from Rev-Pack, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 175, Cuyama, California 93254.



Blunt Frost's Bite: With Road Sport riding gloves from Esprit. These wrist-length gloves are made from Grade A cowhide, are double-stitched with nylon thread and lined in tricot-covered polyurethane. The Road Sport gloves are sewn in a ribbed pattern with curved fingers and a double layer of leather in the palm, and feature an elastic wrist band to seal out the cold. The gloves are available in black leather only for $24.95 from Esprit, Dept. CG, 455 McCormick Blvd., Columbus, Ohio 43213.

RZ Replacements: RZ350 owners who aren't content with having the first RZ on their block might try for the fastest RZ, with a set of pipes from Toomey Racing. The exhaust system features all-aluminum bolt-on mufflers with repackable silencers, tapered head pipes, separate spring flanges and aircraft-quality welding throughout, the company claims. Suggested retail price for the pipes is $300, and they're available from Toomey Racing, Dept. CG, 25901 Belleporte Ave., Harbor City, California 90710.



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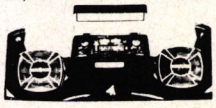

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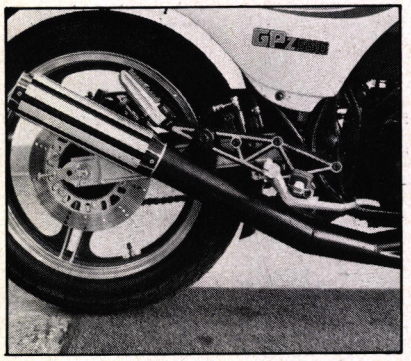
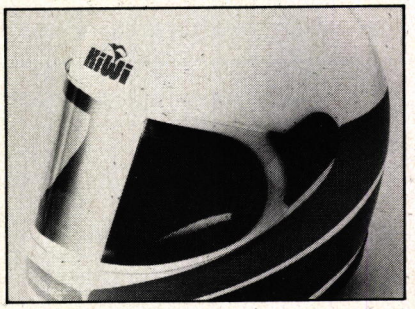


More Moriwaki: To complement its line of hop-up hardware for middleweight Kawasakis, Champion Moriwaki USA has introduced a new exhaust system specifically tuned for the KZ550 and GPz550 series. The system's flat-black tailpipe is spring-anchored to the four-into-one header, and funnels out into a works-type aluminum silencer. The new pipe, Moriwaki claims, increases ground clearance and adds horsepower while reducing weight. Suggested retail for the system is $299.95. To order, write to Champion Moriwaki USA, Dept. CG, 1980 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa, California 92627, or telephone (714) 642-2040.

A Case For Bungees: You can carry bungees in it, but the new motorcycle briefcase from Chase Harper comes with its own. The Deluxe Motorcycle Briefcase is made of 1000-denier Cordura, and features two zippered pockets in the interior as well as several smaller pouches. There are two zippered compartments on the outside of the case, one of which holds two bungee cords that allow easy attachment of the case to most motorcycles. External dimensions for the bag are 17 by 12 by 3 inches, and the case has a suggested retail price of $52.50. For more information, write Chase Harper Co., Dept. CG, P.O. Box 4098, Santa Barbara, California 93103.



K8 Corps: More than $2 million went into the development of this latest Swiss-made helmet from Kiwi, the K8. A computer controls the formation of the K8's fiberglass shell which, Kiwi claims, results in a molding that is both stronger and more precise in thickness and shape than that of other helmets on the market. The K8 carries a Snell-80 certification, and features a one-piece liner upholstered in velour and a flush-fitting visor with a ratchet mechanism that can be operated with either hand. The K8 is available in red, white or black, and has a suggested retail price of $149.95. To order, contact Dyna Tour Corporation, Dept. CG, 1944 Narragansett Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60639.

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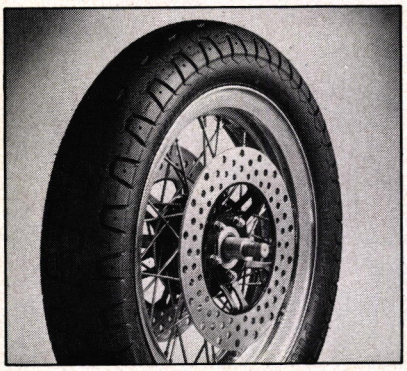

No Bunching: Grapes and bananas bunch up, but the palms on the Pro-Comp gloves from Malcolm Smith are designed not to. These top-of-the-line gloves from MS feature padded and cross-stitched sheepskin palms, vented, stretch nylon backs and knit cuffs. Suggested retail price for the gloves is $25.95, and they're available from Malcolm Smith Motorcycles, Dept. CG, 7563 Indiana Ave., Riverside, California 92504.

Skid Pad: Many racers won't put a wheel on a racetrack without the protection of a brace or protective pad inside their racing leathers. Now Quadrifoglio backs up those riders with its Speed Mode "SP" spine-protection backpad. The ⅜-inch-thick main pad covers the kidney area, while an ⅛-inch-thick plate of impact-resistent plastic, five inches wide, is sewn to the center of the back, then cinched down with Velcro suspenders and waistband. The Speed Mode SP retails for $40.00 from Quadrifoglio, Inc., Dept. CG, 5745 N. 11th St., Phoenix, Arizona 85014.

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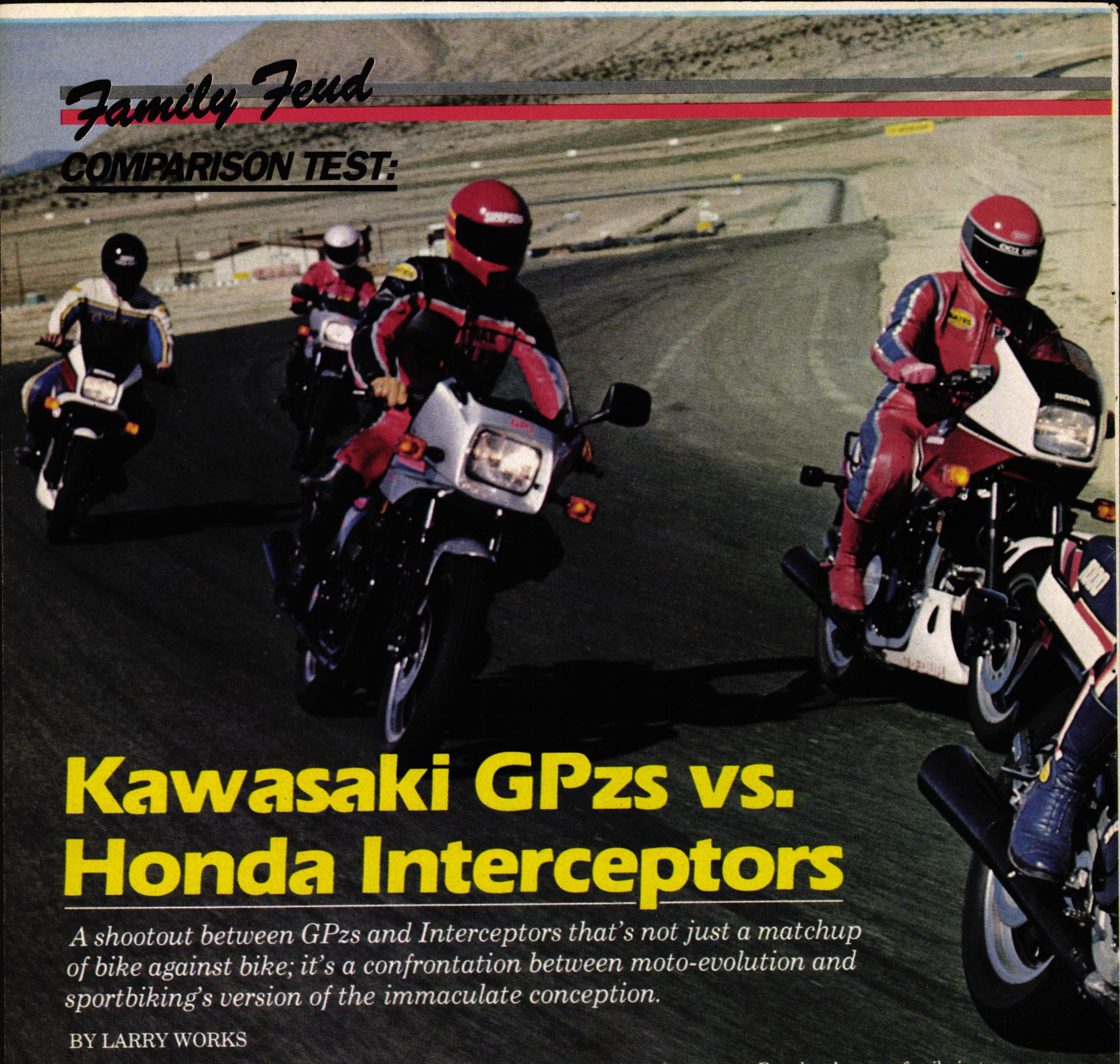


Family Feud

COMPARISON TEST:

Kawasaki GPzs vs. Honda Interceptors

A shootout between GPzs and Interceptors that's not just a matchup of bike against bike; it's a confrontation between moto-evolution and sportbiking's version of the immaculate conception.

BY LARRY WORKS

There are two ways to go about creating a successful motorcycle. The first, by far the most common, is through evolution: Start with an existing design, ruthlessly assess its flaws, then set out to rectify them. The other is through revolution: Sidestep convention altogether and instead concentrate on performance goals, then assemble—or develop—the technology to achieve those goals.

Foremost in the examples of the first approach is Kawasaki's GPz series, which dates back to the GPz550/1100 models of 1981 (with the 750 version coming along a year later). In effect, each GPz was—and, in fact, still is—simply a hopped-up version of some existing Kawasaki streetbike, which in turn could trace its techno-heritage all the way back to the 1973 Z-1. But at each step along the evolutionary path traveled by the GPzs, Kawasaki carefully honed and refined the machines, sophisticating the chassis and building more power into the engines, all with one goal in mind: unequalled sportbike performance.

Too much development, then, has gone into the GPzs to dismiss them as merely 1973 technology disguised in flashy bodywork. Instead, the GPz series has been, throughout its brief existence, the predominant family of sportbikes; and as a group, the GPzs represent the most complete extension of the transverse-four engine design that dominated Seventies-era performance bikes. So, after such constant refinement, it's no wonder that this year's GPzs are the best ever built.

But there's a new family in town, one that is an embodiment of the revolutionary approach to moto-creation: the Interceptor family. Its first member was last year's VF750F, a bike that seemingly sprang full-grown from the collective consciousness of a group of cloistered engineers. That original Interceptor wasn't merely built out of step with existing technology; it was an altogether different approach to creating a sportbike. Instead of starting with an existing streetbike and working up (rough comparisons with Honda's own shaft-drive V45 Sabre and Magna notwithstanding), Honda instead fabricated a full-house sport machine based on its own FWS roadracer. In effect, that made the 750 Interceptor a sportbike that acquired its racing license

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 DAVID DEWHURST

first, and only then applied for street tags. So to say that the 750 Interceptor shook sportbiking to its core borders on understatement.

Now, for 1984, the 750 Interceptor has been backed up with both a 500 and a 1000, giving Honda a three-bike menage of sportbikes to stuff squarely in Kawasaki's face. Clearly, both families are intended to serve the same purpose—to be the best pure-sport motorcycles in their respective classes—but each approaches that goal from an entirely different direction.

All of this, however, is bound to make anyone—us included—wonder which family lives up to that promise most faithfully. And that's precisely why we've gathered you and all of the clan members here. We're about to conduct a barroom brawl of a motorcycle test, a blood feud that will begin on the racetrack and spill over onto the backroads. And the fighting won't be over until that question has been answered and one trio of machines has become 1984's First Family of sportbiking. •

Continued

MOTO GENEOLOGY:

Tech Inspection

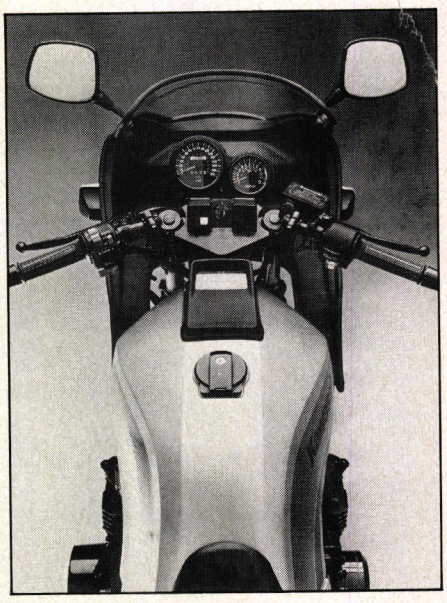
A short climb up the GPz and Interceptor family trees.

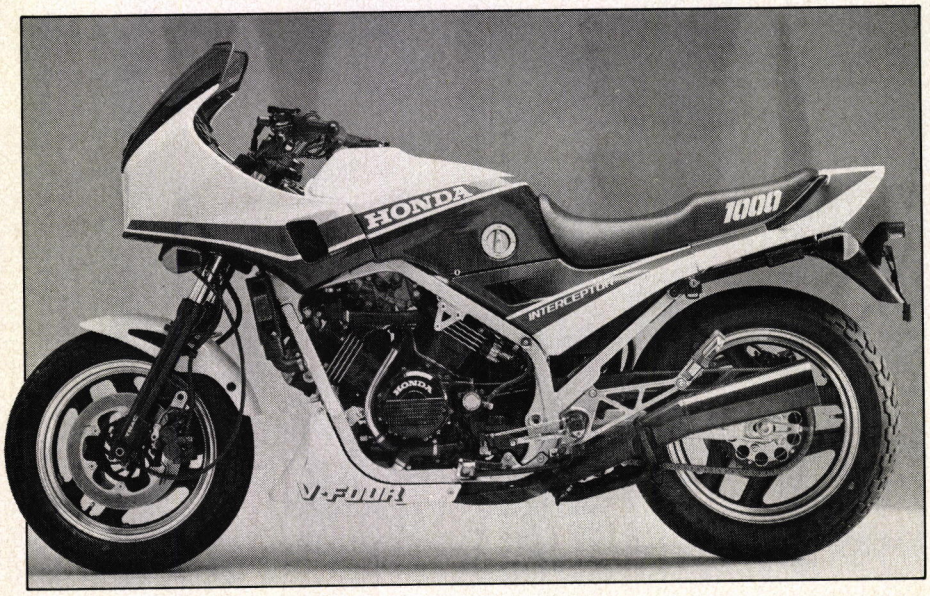
BY PAUL DEAN

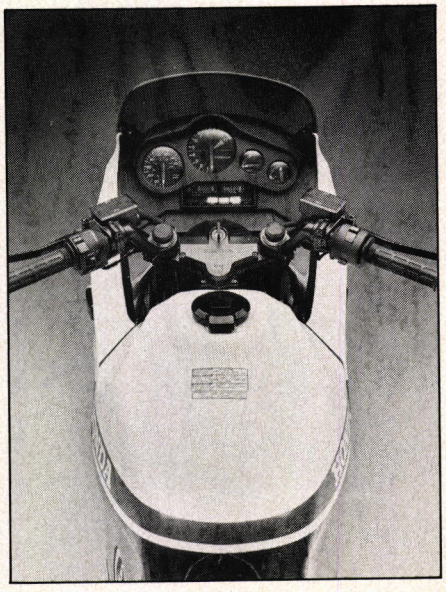
• GPzs and Interceptors constitute one of the great dichotomies in all of motorcycling: They are at once exactly the same and entirely different. Their sameness stems from the fact that all six are flat-out, damn-the-torpedoes sportbikes, box-stock roadracers, really, designed to please the very same hard-core canyon-crazies. But in virtually every other way—visually, mechanically and, as we are about to learn, kinesthetically—Kawwasaki's GPzs are no more like Honda's Interceptors than night is like day.

For starters, just look at the GPzs, a three-bike line of backroad bullets that was built by duplicating a single styling theme—which explains why, at a glance, it's difficult to tell one GPz from another. They all have nearly identical shapes, colors (Quartz Silver is available for '84, in addition to the usual GPz Firecracker Red) and graphics, and all use what amounts to cloned bodywork, right down to each bike's half-fairing, asymmetrical speedometer and tachometer, and LCD instrumentation atop its fuel tank. Honda, on the other hand, wanted each Interceptor model to have its own identity; and so, rather than merely Xeroxing the original 750 Interceptor, Honda designed three slightly different variations on the basic Interceptor theme. Consequently, the body shape, the paint scheme and the instrumentation package on each size of Interceptor is very similar to those on its fellow VF models, but quite different in execution.

Mechanically, though, the three Interceptors are remarkably similar. All are







powered by liquid-cooled, dohc, 16-valve, tandem vee-four engines that have unusually high compression ratios, redlines well into the five-digit zone, and wildly oversquare bore-stroke ratios (the VF500F's bore is 1.36 times larger than its stroke; the VF750F's and VF1000F's both are 1.44 times larger). Each Interceptor is fed by a quartet of Keihin constant-vacuum carburetors nestled snugly in its vee-spread, and VFs all use screw-type valve-lash adjusters. What's more, because all of the Interceptor engines are 90-degree vees and thus have perfect primary balance, they don't require any vibration-quelling counterbalancers or rubberized motor-mounts.

Not so the GPzs, all of which have air-cooled, dohc, transverse four-cylinder engines mounted in rubber (with the sole exception of the GPz1100's upper-rear mount) to help isolate the high-frequency vibrations that inline-fours tend to emit. All GPz engines are of the two-valve-per-cylinder variety, have oversquare bore-and-stroke dimensions—although not as dramatically so as do the Interceptors—and run with compression ratios one full point below those of their Honda counterparts. The GPzs use shim-type valve adjusters beneath inverted-bucket cam followers, a system that generally requires attention less often than the screw-types on the Interceptors but is more difficult and expensive for the owner to service. The two smaller GPzs inhale through CV carbs (27mm Teikei Kikakis on the 550; 34mm Mikunis on the 750); and for the fourth consecutive year, the GPz1100 has electronic fuel-injection, utilizing a digital computer to meter fuel according to prevailing engine-operating conditions. Like the 500 Interceptor, the GPz550 has a close-ratio six-speed gearbox, but the four bigger members of both families use five-speeders with more widely spaced ratios. All the Interceptors have hydraulic clutches, while all three GPzs use conventional cable-actuated clutches.

"Conventional" also seems a fair description of the chassis on the GPzs, all of which employ strong but relatively orthodox double-downtube frames fabricated of round steel tubing. The Interceptors, however, have box-section steel-tube frames (except for the rear section on the VF500F, which is of round tubing) that are configured like those on many GP roadracing bikes, and

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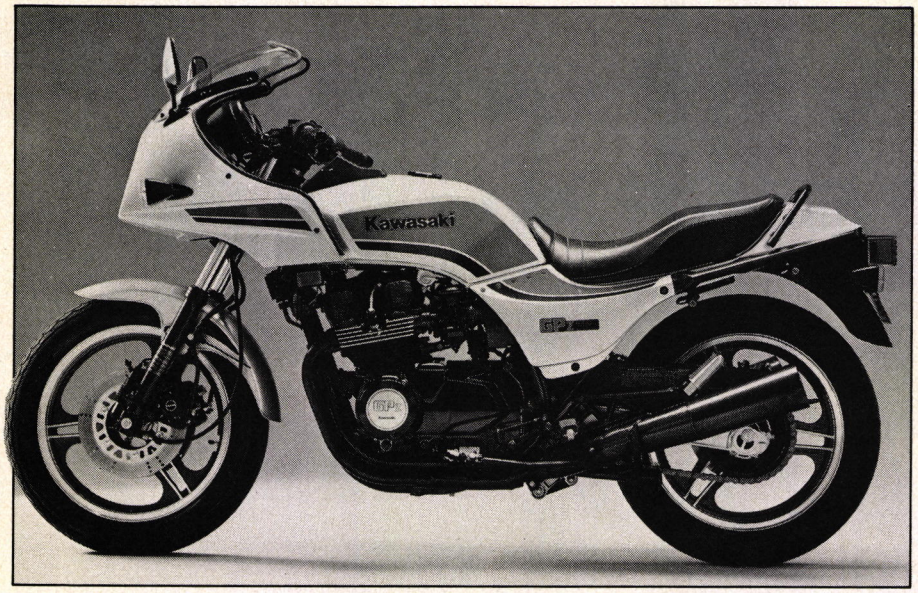
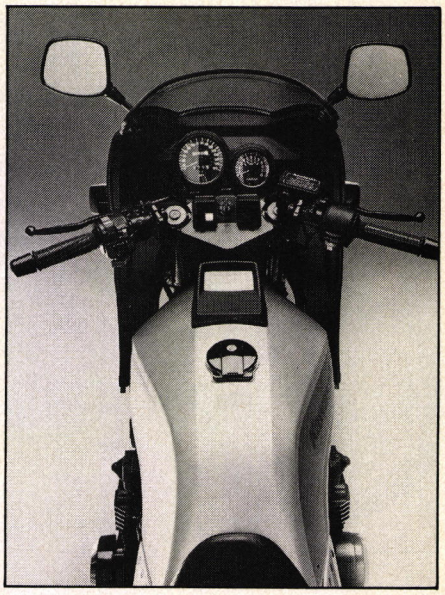
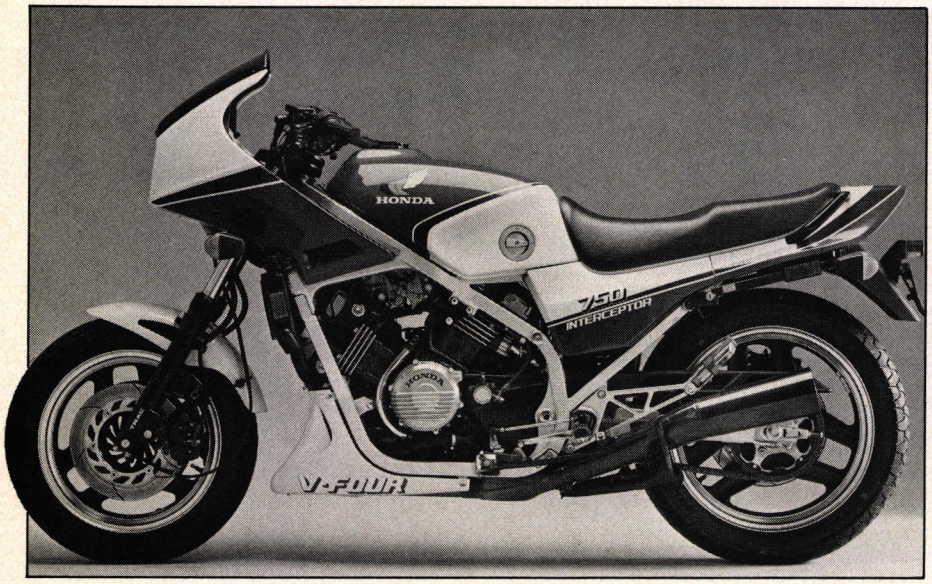
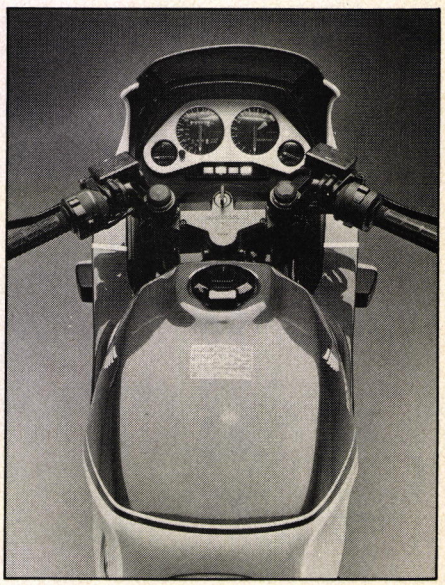






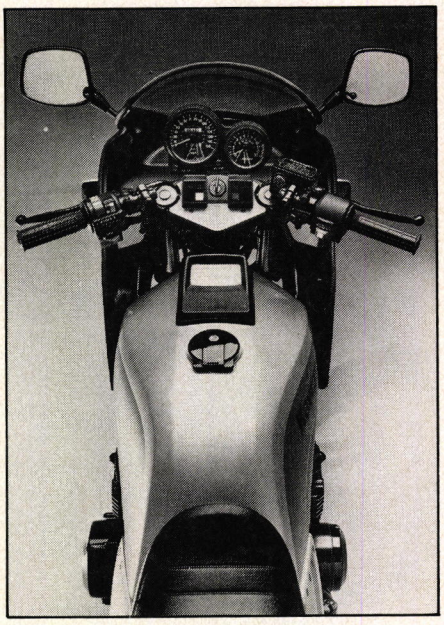


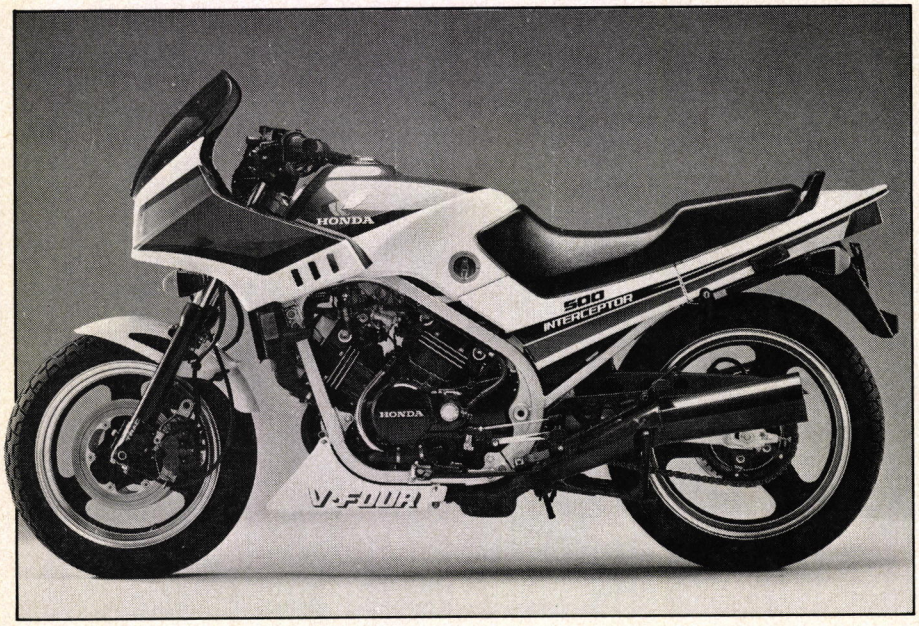
that afford superior triangulation between two crucial points—the steering head and the swingarm pivot. Of the six machines, only the GPz1100 has steering geometry that could not be considered "quick"; but because the VFs have 16-inch front wheels and the GPzs have 18-inchers, any comparison of steering-geometry numbers is all but meaningless.

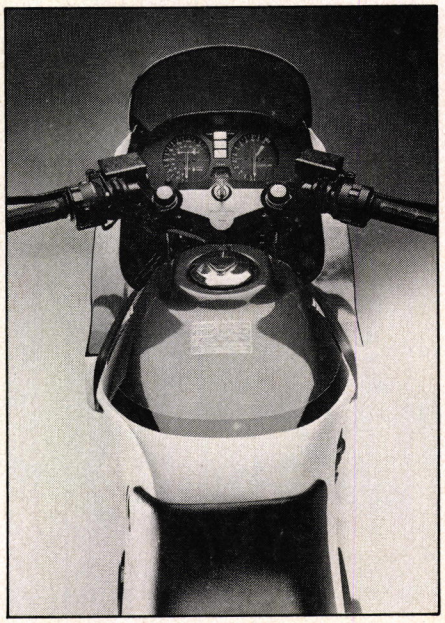
At least Honda and Kawasaki agree on rear-wheel sizes, each choosing 18-inchers for its two smaller sportbikes and 17-inch wheels for the liter-class heavyweights—although the VF1000F's 140/80 tire puts down a bigger footprint than the GPz1100's 130/90 rubber. Both companies also see eye-to-eye in basic suspension configuration, if not in actual design. All six bikes have rising-rate, single-shock rear suspension systems utilizing aluminum swingarms, and all but the GPz550 use an air-spring rear shock unit. The 550 has a spring-only shock equipped with a remote, hand-operated preload adjuster beneath the right sidecover. And all but one of the rear shocks have four-position rebound-damping adjusters, the lone exception being the VF1000F's three-way adjuster.

Up front, each of the six bikes wears an inline-axle, air-assisted front fork, and the two larger Interceptors have adjustable rebound damping—but on the right fork leg only; the left leg houses Honda's patented adjustable TRAC (Torque Reactive Anti-dive Control) system. All three GPzs also have adjustable anti-dives, but Kawasaki's design utilizes two complete systems per bike—one on each fork slider. And while Kawasaki's anti-dive action is triggered by brake-line pressure, Honda's is actuated by the torque reaction of the brake caliper.

That similarity of intention and dissimilarity of execution seems to be the rule rather than the exception when it comes to comparing these two families of sport-intensive motorcycles. The same thing applies to the way they perform. For while a GPz is, admittedly, designed for precisely the same job as an Interceptor, you don't think they both do it in precisely the same way . . . do you? •







THE BIG GUNS:

GPz1100 vs. VF1000F Interceptor

When the horsepower kings of these two families lock horns, a friendly rivalry becomes nuclear warfare.

BY PAUL DEAN

• On paper, it promised to be a classic rout, if not an out-and-out annihilation. Pitted against Honda's imposing new one-liter Interceptor, Kawasaki's aging GPz1100 seemed hopelessly outclassed, destined to be blown off the road in a shriek of vee-four exhaust and a cloud of V-rated rubber. After all, the VF1000F is a reincarnation of last year's *wunderbike,* the 750 Interceptor, while the GPz1100's roots extend back through numerous laminations in time and technology to 1973 and the very first 903cc Z-1. No wonder the new-wave Honda threatened to turn any comparison with the old-guard Kawasaki into a debacle.

But that's not what happened—not quite. The outcome was much closer than anticipated, for two reasons. For one, the "old" GPz1100 still has a lot of life left in it; and for another, the VF1000F literally is more than Honda had hoped it would be.

Honda's concept was to build a liter-class vee-four sportbike that would be only a few scant pounds heavier than the highly acclaimed 750 Interceptor. That obviously ruled out the 1100cc V65 engine, which is significantly heavier than the 750 version. So the smaller engine was bored (7mm, enough to require "wet" cylinder liners) and stroked (5mm, as much as the basic 750 design could accommodate) to its practical limits, yielding 998cc of displacement.

But that 33 percent increase in displacement demanded that all stressed components be made stronger (read: heavier). The crankshaft, connecting rods, piston pins, valves, bearing sizes, even the upper engine case (of which the cylinders are a part), all had to be scaled up, and two sets of plates were added to the clutch. The 1000 kept the same transmission ratios as the 750 except for a taller top gear (as well as taller primary- and final-drive ratios), but the gears were widened. And by the time most of the chassis components also were suitably upsized, Honda ended up with a not-so-light (536 pounds, 25 pounds more than the VF750F) one-liter sport machine.

Neither is the GPz1100, at 560 pounds, any lightweight. The addition of Uni-Trak single-shock rear suspension and a larger fairing, both in 1983, endowed the 1100 with about 26 pounds it hadn't carried in 1982. And the bike is virtually the same this year as last, although it has more rear-shock rebound damping, a 20mm-longer steering head, heavier-wall tubing in the frame's front downtubes, and a 2mm-thicker swingarm-pivot axle. But the 1089cc inline-four engine is absolutely identical to last year's and still bears strong resemblance to that original Z-1 motor.

Despite its age, though, the GPz engine remains a mighty impressive performer. In terms of low-end and midrange power it's

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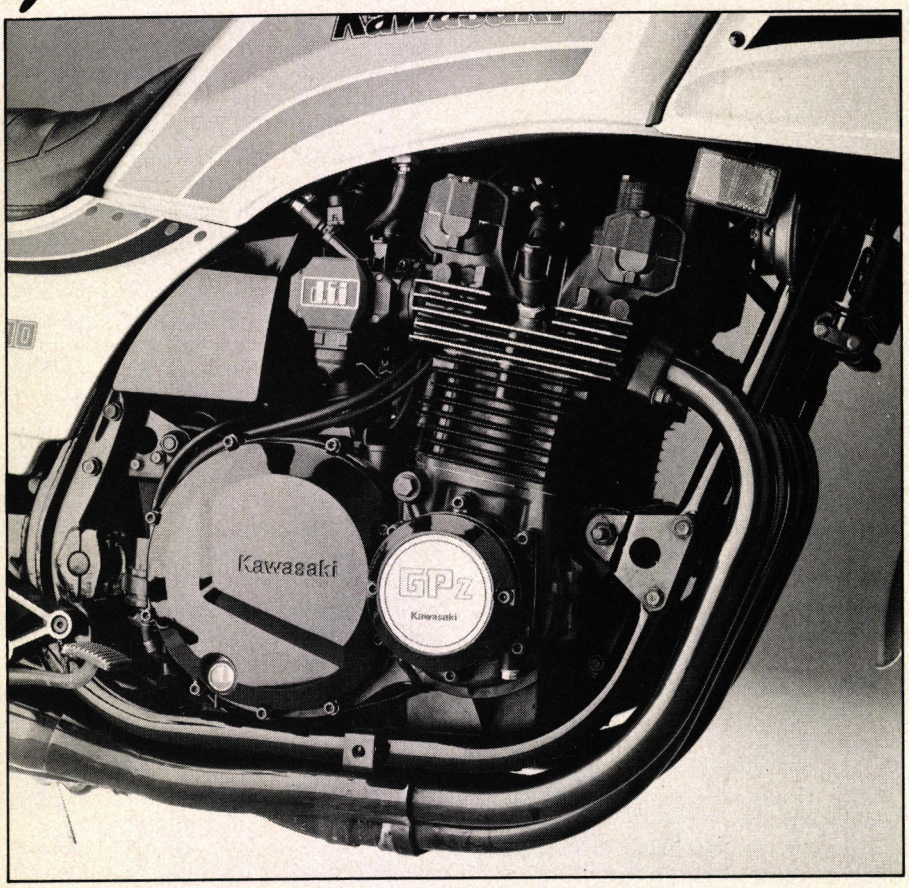
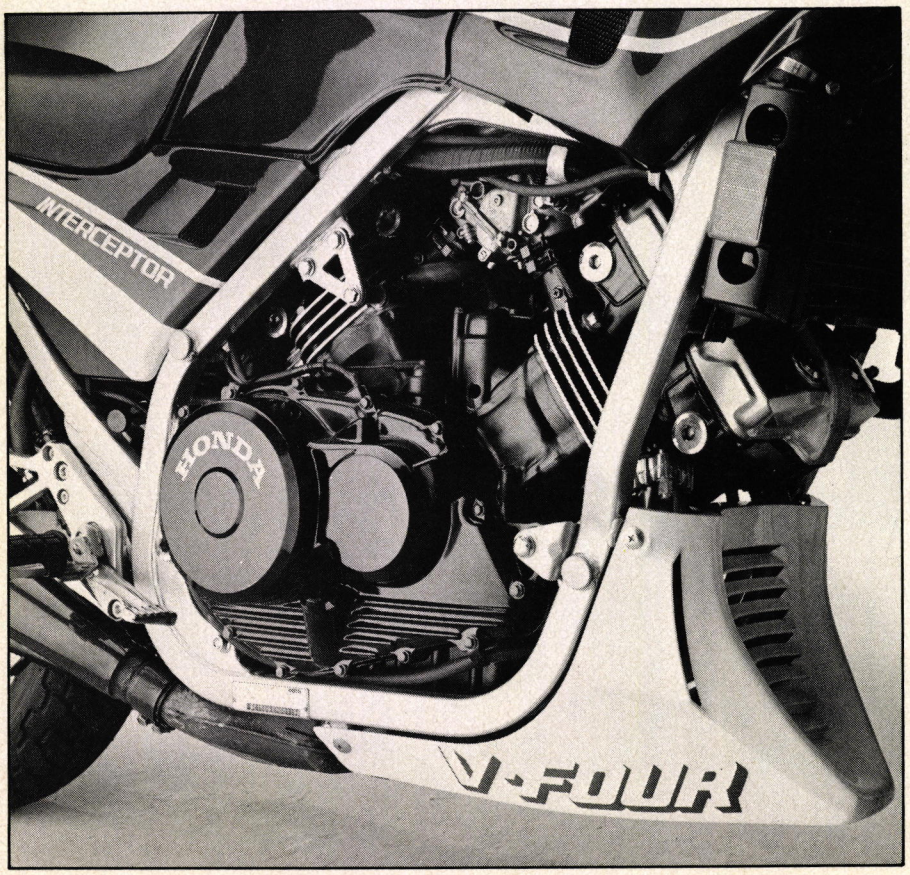
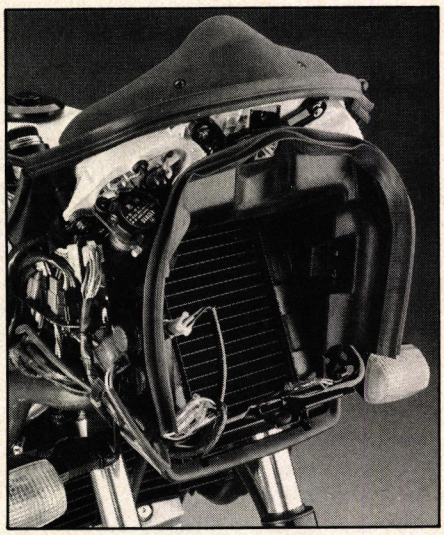
Family Feud



GPz1100 and VF1000F motors each are just one in a long line of engine designs

But while one is at the very beginning of the line, the other is nearer the end.





VF's auxiliary radiator hides in fairing

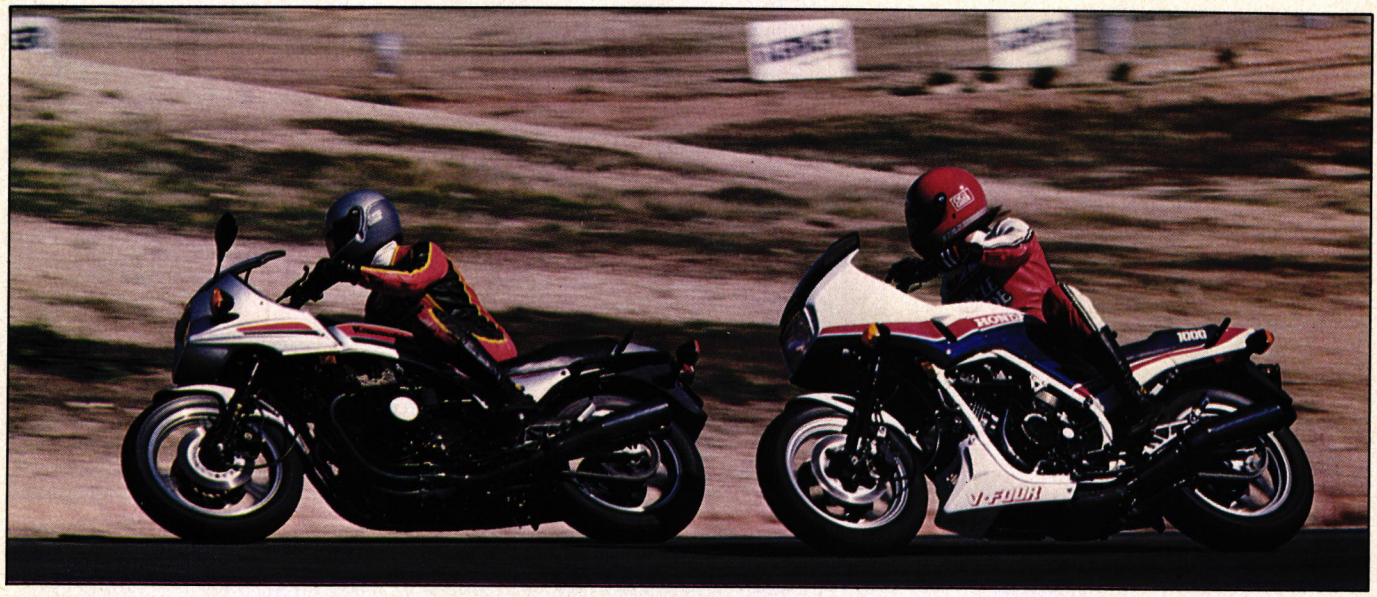
A high center of gravity gives it away.

about average for a litermotor, but it really comes to life and starts making serious, big-time horsepower in the upper one-third of its rpm range. The vee-four Honda, on the other hand, has what feels like a perfectly linear power output, with nary a trace of a dip or a peak anywhere. Honda says the 1000 has "only" 113 horsepower, compared with Kawasaki's boasts of 120 horses for the 1100; but the VF acts almost like it makes that 113 hp all the time, with a powerband that begins at idle and ends only when the electronic ignition's rev-limiter cuts in at around 11,000 rpm.

Consequently, the Honda's engine outguns the Kawasaki's in every way except when the GPz is spinning between seven grand and its 9500-rpm redline; there, the two are about equal, which is quite an accomplishment for an 11-year-old design competing with the latest in nouveau-tech motors. But the Interceptor is about three-tenths quicker than the Kawasaki in the quarter, and squeaks out a few more mph in top speed; and because of its phenomenal low-end and midrange power, the VF positively *stomps* the GPz in any kind of roll-on contest, responding as though rear-ended by a speeding bus.

With so much torque always at the ready, it's ridiculously easy to make the VF go absurdly fast, either on the open road or in the twisties. Just turning the twistgrip usually suffices; downshifting is required only if you want the bike to launch out of a corner like an ICBM with handlebars—which it will do if you play the gearbox properly. The GPz also is blisteringly fast, but you must be more conscious of rpm and gear selection to tap its performance potential.

Throughout most of its rpm range, though, the Kawasaki's engine is smoother than the Honda's. There's a low-frequency shudder down around idle, and at high revs there's a strong buzz in the pegs, grips and,



in particular, the shift lever. But in between, the big 1100 generally is as smooth as glass. The Honda's engine never feels as ethereally smooth as the Kawasaki's often does, but it also never emits any large or annoying vibrations.

Both bikes, in fact, are so unbothered by vibration that smoothness is not an issue. But the ways in which that smooth running was achieved—i.e., a solidly mounted, 90-degree vee-four in the Honda, a rubber-mounted inline-four in the Kawasaki—is significant. Rubber mounts compromise frame rigidity, a fact that Kawasaki acknowledged by using them only at the front of the 1100's engine; and that perhaps explains why the '84 GPz1100 tends to wallow during high-speed cornering regardless of how the suspension is adjusted, whereas the '82 model (the last GPz11 without rubber mounts) did not. But the solid-mount Honda refuses to twitch or wiggle, no matter what combination of air-pressure and damping is dialed into its suspension.

Not that the Honda is totally above reproach in the handling department. Its 16-inch front wheel and quick steering geometry do make the bike exceptionally easy to steer and, at high speeds, unusually responsive for a 536-pounder. But the VF1000 has a noticeably higher center of gravity than the VF750, due to its enlarged engine (although the 1000's motor sits 20mm lower than the 750's) and collection of upscale hardware. The latter includes the cooling system's auxiliary radiator, which had to be moved from behind the bottom cowling on the 750 (because of the lower engine placement on the 1000), made larger, and placed inside the fairing, behind the headlight. All of this makes the VF1000F feel top-heavy, most noticeably at low speed and in slower corners; the bike also actively resists being banked over into any turn while the brakes are applied. As a result, the GPz, despite its greater weight, larger front wheel and slower steering geometry, feels lighter and less cumbersome in most low- and medium-speed situations, and is more willing to be herded into a corner while being braked.

As the speeds increase, the bikes undergo a role-reversal, with the Honda soon feeling the lighter of the two. Initiating high-speed turns takes much less effort on the VF, and quick side-to-side maneuvers, such as flicking through fast S-bends, are considerably easier than on the GPz. Kawasaki obviously had high-speed stability in mind when calculating the 1100's geometry, but ironically, the light-steering VF1000F is every bit as stable, if not more so.

The VF also has stickier tires, which it needs, considering how forcefully its engine can propel it into and out of corners. Going in, the wide front tire, powerful front brakes and effective anti-dive (which is more than can be said for the GPz's system) let the VF shed speed quickly and controllably, despite the rear brake's tendency to lack feel and lock easily. And when exiting a turn, the VF's super-fat rear tire hangs on tenaciously, although it will break loose if the engine's ferocious torque isn't used prudently. But don't look for the rear tire to last more than a few thousand miles, even under moderate use. And while the GPz's tires are harder and thus have a somewhat longer life-expectancy, their upper limits of performance are a bit below those of the Honda's rubber.

Finding those limits is made easier by the generous cornering clearance afforded by both bikes, but unlike the smaller Interceptors, the 1000 has less clearance than its GPz counterpart. The VF's lowered engine is the culprit, and allows the exhaust Power Chamber to hit down first—and, sometimes, quite hard. The GPz grazes the centerstand and sidestand feet, but never hard or often enough to be of concern.

Honda was sufficiently concerned about cornering clearance, however, to give the 1000 stiffer and less-progressive suspension than the 750 from which it is derived. The GPz1100 is rather firm, too, with a front fork that has more seal friction than the VF's. Nonetheless, both bikes ride acceptably well, with the Kawasaki having slightly more pleasant overall ride qualities than the Honda when both bikes' suspensions are adjusted full-soft. Both do, however, have a similar need for more damping on their stiffest rear-shock rebound settings.

Both bikes also are similar in the sporty ergonomics provided by their rearset footpegs and comparatively low, cast-aluminum handlebars (the GPz's bars are 50mm higher this year). There's not a world of difference in their riding positions, but the Honda has a longer seat-to-handlebar span, perhaps making it a better fit for tall or long-armed riders; those of average size will undoubtedly find the GPz's riding position more to their liking.

Matter of fact, not just riders of average size, but those of average riding ability who play-race only with average levels of aggression just might find the GPz1100 more satisfying in many respects. It certainly sounds more like a classic hot-rod than the vee-four Honda, whose flat, droning exhaust note isn't nearly as inspiring as the high-pitched wail of the Kawasaki's inline-four. When the GPz hits its high-rpm powerband, it *feels* like a hot-rod, as well. And for riders willing to give their best on a backroad—but not their all—the 1100's lack of hair-trigger steering response can be a confidence-inspiring asset rather than a liability.

But when you strip away all those qualifications and stare at the cold facts and hard numbers, there's no question that as an all-out sportbike, the VF1000F is superior to the GPz1100. In the upper stratosphere of pure sport performance—which is

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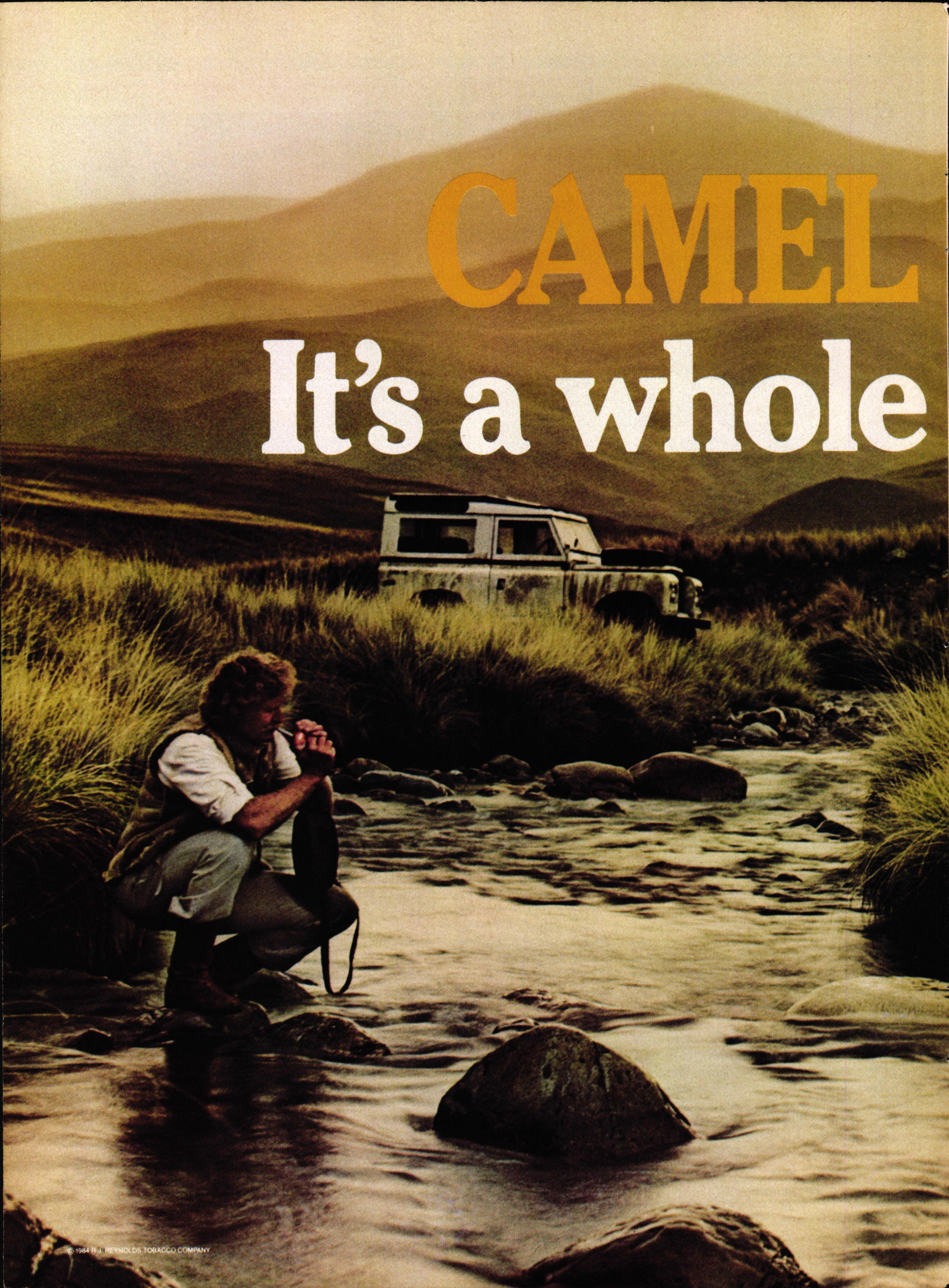
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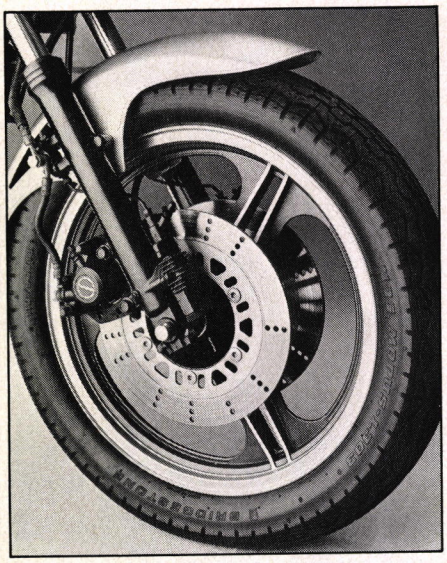
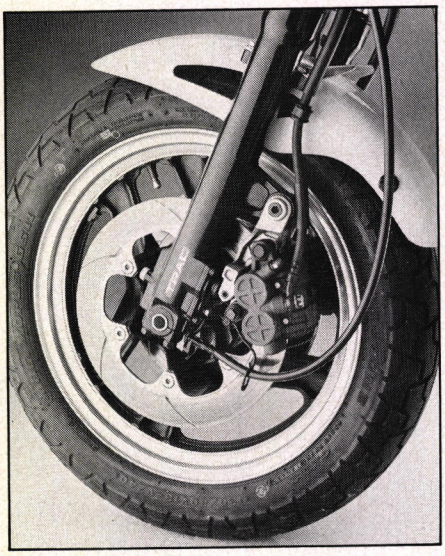
Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

Family Feud



16-incher gives the VF the racer's edge

Little wheels have become big deals.



precisely where such a bike is intended to operate—it outruns and outhandles the GPz in every way. And best of all, its excellence in flat-out corner-carving doesn't come at the expense of its usefulness as all-around transportation.

As good as the Honda is, though, only two things about it really surprised—and disappointed—us: its weight and its high center of gravity. Otherwise, the VF1000F delivered all the greatness we had expected. We didn't, however, expect to find that the Kawasaki could not be humiliated by the Honda in any way; despite the Kaw's advancing years, the GPz always was right there, breathing down the VF's neck every step along the way.

But while the GPz's strong showing seems to indicate that the basic Z-1 design isn't dead yet, the facts do not augur well for the bike's future. You see, most of its improvements lie behind it, but all of the 1000cc Interceptor's are yet to come. •

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

MOTORCYCLE		GPz1100	VF1000F Interceptor
IMPORTER		Kawasaki Motors Corp. 2001 East Edinger Avenue Santa Ana, California 92711	American Honda Motor Company Inc. 100 West Alondra Boulevard Gardena, California 90247
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE		$4799	not yet set by manufacturer
ENGINE			
	Type	four-stroke transverse vertical four	liquid-cooled four-stroke 90-degree tandem vee-four
	Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
	Bore and stroke	72.5mm x 66.0mm	77.0mm x 53.6mm
	Displacement	1089.9cc	998.4cc
	Compression ratio	9.5:1	10.5:1
	Engine redline	9500 rpm	10,500 rpm
	Carburetion	Nippondenso electronic fuel injection, four 34mm throttle bodies	four 34.2mm Keihin constant-vacuum
	Air filter	dual-stage washable oiled foam element	disposable paper element
	Lubrication	wet sump	wet sump
	Starting system	electric only	electric only
	Ignition	transistorized breakerless	transistorized breakerless
	Charging system	12-volt; 280-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 16-ampere-hour battery	12-volt; 350-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 16-ampere-hour battery
DRIVETRAIN			
	Primary drive	straight-cut gears; 1.732:1 ratio	straight-cut gears; 1.971:1 ratio
	Clutch	wet, multi-plate	wet, multi-plate, with one-way overrun clutch
	Final drive	#630 O-ring chain (¾-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.733:1 (41/15) ratio	#530 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.529:1 (43/17) ratio
	Gear	Internal gear ratio / Overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM	Internal gear ratio / Overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM
	I	2.643 / 12.513 / 5.85	2.733 / 13.630 / 5.72
	II	1.833 / 8.680 / 8.44	1.895 / 9.448 / 8.25
	III	1.421 / 6.728 / 10.88	1.500 / 7.480 / 10.42
	IV	1.174 / 5.558 / 13.17	1.240 / 6.183 / 12.60
	V	1.040 / 4.924 / 14.87	1.037 / 5.171 / 15.07
SUSPENSION/ WHEEL TRAVEL	Front	Kayaba air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.9 in. (150mm)	Showa air-spring, 41mm stanchion tube diameter, 3-position adjustable rebound damping, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.6 in. (142mm)
	Rear	single Kayaba air-spring shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/5.1 in. (130mm)	single Showa air-spring shock, 3-position adjustable rebound damping/5.2 in. (132mm)
BRAKES			
	Front	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.9-in. (278mm) effective disc diameter	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.6-in. (270mm) effective disc diameter
	Rear	single-action hydraulic caliper, 10.5-in. (267mm) effective disc diameter	single-action hydraulic caliper, 10.6-in. (270mm) effective disc diameter
TIRES			
	Front	110/90V18 Bridgestone Mag Mopus L303 tubeless	120/80V16 V240 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G511 tubeless
	Rear	130/90V17 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G508 tubeless	140/80V17 V240 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G520 tubeless
DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES			
	Weight	560 lbs. (254.0kg)	536 lbs. (243.1kg)
	Weight distribution	48.1% front, 51.9% rear	48.3% front, 51.7% rear
	Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)	976 lbs. (442kg)	935 lbs. (424kg)
	Load capacity (with full fuel tank)	382 lbs. (173kg)	359 lbs. (163kg)
	Wheelbase	60.9 to 61.9 in. (1548 to 1571mm)	58.9 to 60.2 in. (1486 to 1528mm)
	Seat height	32.2 in. (819mm)	32.2 in. (816mm)
	Handlebar width	26.2 in. (665mm)	adjustable from 26.6 to 28.4 in. (675 to 720mm)
	Footpeg height	14.5 in. (367mm)	13.2 in. (336mm)
	Ground clearance	6.0 in. (152mm), at exhaust header pipes	5.4 in. (137mm), at centerstand
	Steering head angle	27.5 degrees from vertical	28.0 degrees from vertical
	Front wheel trail	4.57 in. (116mm)	3.86 in. (98mm)
	Frame	tubular mild steel, double front downtubes	box section and round mild-steel tubing, double front downtubes
	Oil capacity	3.9 qt. (3.7/)	3.7 qt. (3.5/)
	Fuel tank	steel, 5.5 gal. (20.7/), including 0.7 gal. (2.7/) reserve	steel, 6.5 gal. (24.5/), including 1.3 gal. (5.0/) reserve
	Instrumentation	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, voltmeter, LCD fuel gauge, LCD/bulb-type monitor system	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, fuel gauge, coolant temperature gauge
PERFORMANCE			
	Fuel consumption range	24 to 48 mpg (10 to 20 km/l)	23 to 45 mpg (10 to 19 km/l)
	Average fuel consumption	37 mpg (16 km/l)	33 mpg (14 km/l)
	Cruising range, maximum	132 to 264 miles (212 to 425km)	150 to 293 miles (241 to 471km)
	Cruising range, reserve only	17 to 34 miles (27 to 55km)	30 to 59 miles (48 to 95km)
	Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated	30 mph actual	29 mph actual
	Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated	51 mph actual	54 mph actual
	Best 1/4-mile acceleration	11.312 sec., 120.80 mph (194 km/h)	11.121 sec., 123.45 mph (199 km/h)
	Top speed (observed)	145 mph (233 km/h)	150 mph (241 km/h)
	Stopping distance from 30 mph	31 ft. (9.4m)	29 ft. (8.8m)
	Stopping distance from 60 mph	120 ft. (36.6m)	125 ft. (38.1m)
WARRANTY:		12 months, unlimited mileage	12 months unlimited mileage
AVAILABLE COLORS:		Firecracker Red; Quartz Silver	white-and-blue only

THE ORIGINAL CALL TO ARMS:

GPz750 vs. VF750F Interceptor

The school takes on a new principle.

BY PAUL DEAN

• When Honda's 750 Interceptor burst on the scene last year, it threatened not only to beat the competition but to render it obsolete. In fact, the VF750F seemed so highly sophisticated and utterly competent, both in the canyons and on the racetrack, that it portended the imminent demise of all sportbikes powered by inline four-cylinder engines.

But so far, the inline-four sport motorcycle has proved an enduring breed. The other manufacturers haven't yet leaped aboard the vee-four bandwagon, and interest in traditional sportbikes has remained surprisingly strong. And on the racetrack, a GPz750-based Kawasaki even won the 1983 Superbike crown against a fleet of high-tech Honda vees. Obviously, the GPz750 was one inline-four that was more of a match for the vee-four than most had imagined.

That mano-a-mano confrontation hasn't changed much for 1984, since both the VF750F and the GPz750 have undergone only minor model-year changes. The new Interceptor wears slightly different graphics, has clear glass over its instrument faces rather than frosted lenses, and features a new push-to-cancel turnsignal switch. The cams and cam followers now undergo a different heat-treatment process to correct a premature-wear problem suffered by some '83 models, and the orifices that route oil to those components have been enlarged 1mm, as well. Caged ball bearings replace the roller bearings in the steering head; and because the Pro-Link rear suspension linkage now pivots in needle bearings and thus moves more freely, the rear shock has higher damping rates throughout its four-position adjustment range. But perhaps the biggest change to the Honda is its dramatic rise in price: Due to the import tariff imposed last year, the '84 Interceptor retails for $4398, a full $900 more than the '83 VF750F.

Although the GPz is built in Lincoln, Nebraska, and not subject to the tariff, its $3699 pricetag also reflects the GPz's biggest change for '84, a $300 price increase. Mechanically, even fewer alterations were made to the Kawasaki than to the Honda. A new black plastic liner shrouds the inside of the frame-mounted half-fairing, and the spring rates on the air-assisted fork and ad-

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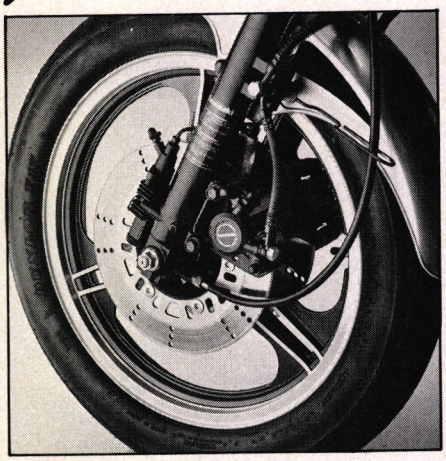
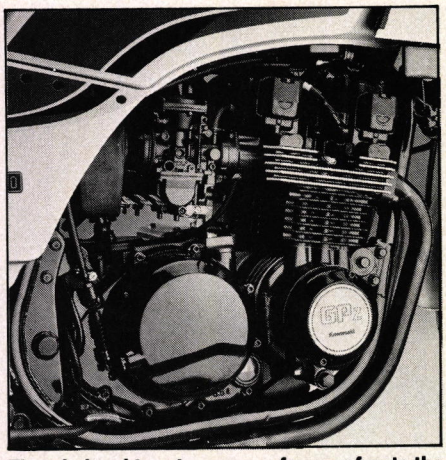
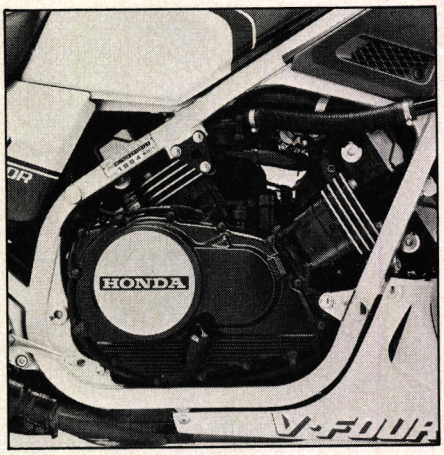
Family Feud



Small- and big-think front ends

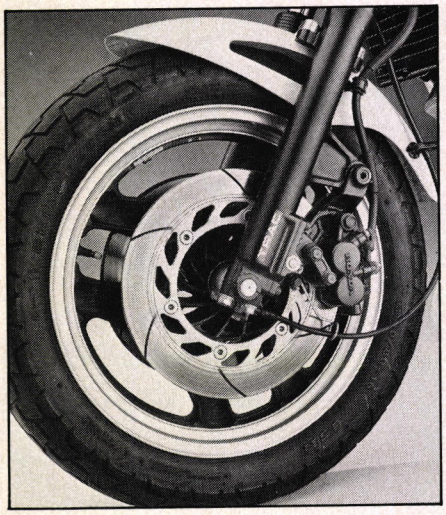
The 16- versus the 18-inch solution.





The tried-and-true transverse-four confronts the challenge of the modern vee

Is it a case of the aging king against the sportbike heir apparent?



justable-damping Kayaba rear shock are slightly higher. The cast handlebars have 50mm more rise and 20mm more width, which helps reduce the heavy steering feel that hampered the '83 model's agility on twisty roads. The taller controls also make the GPz750 a more agreeable companion for both long-distance and around-town riding by raising the rider from the full-on racer's crouch that last year's bike required.

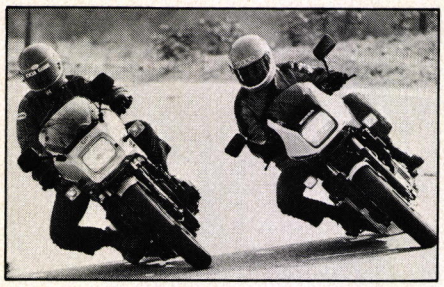
Commuting, however, or even brisk sport-touring, is not the ideal way to exploit the virtues of either the Interceptor or the GPz. Both were designed as cutting-edge, pure-sport machines; and at that they excel, though in very different ways.

At the core of the Interceptor's character is its engine. Roll open the throttle and a strong, unbroken stream of power gushes from the vee-four, from idle to its 10,500-rpm redline and beyond. That supremely wide powerband allows the VF to engulf most long, sweeping turns in a single gear—which is the best strategy for maintaining the smoothest lines on the VF, since it has sufficient driveline lash to make on/off throttle transitions quite abrupt. The GPz has no such lash problems, but its engine must be wrung right to its 10,000-rpm redline for it to even try to match the Honda's implacable, trainlike drive out of fast corners. The Interceptor also will run away from the GPz in roll-on acceleration contests from cruising speeds. And on the open road, the Interceptor's rumbling, low-frequency vibration is less unpleasant than the GPz's high-frequency hum.

The differences between the GPz and In-

terceptor schools of thought are even more apparent in the area of high-speed handling. The GPz's stability and solid feel come at the expense of quick steering and suspension compliance. Once thrown into a turn, the Kawasaki will track along its appointed line in an unwavering trajectory, but, wider handlebars notwithstanding, it still resists sudden directional changes. By contrast, the Interceptor is amazingly agile, and allows its rider to change lines and react to road conditions much more readily. The VF's tack-sharp steering is both neutral and immediate, and its suspension efficiently soaks up pavement ripples; thus, the Interceptor can dive inside the GPz on twisty, bumpy backroads, whereas the Kawasaki is committed to classic, sweeping arcs through corners, and to being upset by bumps more easily. Further, the power and precision of the Interceptor's triple discs allow the bike to run deeper into corners without the rider feeling as though he has ruffled the VF's placid demeanor.

That, however, is on the street. But in the unchanging orbit of the racetrack, the two are virtually equal. There, any differences



in lap times are more of a reflection of individual riding styles and abilities than of either bike's performance potential. On a smooth, undeviating, known course, the GPz's shortfalls are easier for a rider to deal with and, subsequently, overcome. But out in the real world of backroad corner-carving, where all you know about most turns is what you can see of them in any given millisecond, the GPz's character traits will inevitably cast it in the role of playing catch-up to the Honda.

Understand, however, that both of these machines are highly competent sporting motorcycles by anyone's standards; it's just that each conducts business in a different way. Traditionalists will be drawn to the GPz's old-school style of rigid discipline: There is no talking, no gum-chewing, and full attention must be paid in the Kawasaki's classroom. Contrarily, a VF750F rider is more like a student of some free-form curriculum: He's allowed more leeway in his selection of lines and styles rather than being forced to play only by the bike's rules. And in that way, new technology indeed has given the Interceptor an edge—one that the GPz seems unlikely ever to overcome. ●

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

MOTORCYCLE		GPz750	VF750F Interceptor
IMPORTER		Kawasaki Motors Corp., 2001 East Edinger Avenue Santa Ana, California 92711	American Honda Motor Company Inc. 100 West Alondra Boulevard Gardena, California 90247
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE		$3699	$4298
ENGINE			
	Type	four-stroke transverse vertical four	liquid-cooled four-stroke 90-degree tandem vee-four
	Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
	Bore and stroke	66.0mm x 54.0mm	70.0mm x 48.6mm
	Displacement	739.0cc	748.1cc
	Compression ratio	9.5:1	10.5:1
	Engine redline	10,000 rpm	10,500 rpm
	Carburetion	four 34mm Mikuni constant-vacuum	four 30mm Keihin constant-vacuum
	Air filter	washable oiled foam element	disposable paper element
	Lubrication	wet sump	wet sump
	Starting system	electric only	electric only
	Ignition	transistorized breakerless	transistorized breakerless
	Charging system	12-volt; 240-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 14-ampere-hour battery	12-volt; 300-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 14-ampere-hour battery
DRIVETRAIN			
	Primary drive		straight-cut gears; 2.588:1 ratio
	Clutch	wet, multi-plate	wet, multi-plate, with one-way overrun clutch
	Crankshaft-to-transmission drive	inverted-tooth chain; 1.174:1 ratio	
	Jackshaft-to-transmission drive	straight-cut gears; 2.172:1 ratio	
	Final drive	#630 O-ring chain (¾-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.533:1 (38/15) ratio	#530 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.588:1 (44/17) ratio
	Gear	Internal gear ratio / Overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM	Internal gear ratio / Overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM
	I	2.333 / 15.075 / 5.04	2.733 / 15.222 / 5.02
	II	1.632 / 10.541 / 7.21	1.895 / 10.555 / 7.24
	III	1.272 / 8.223 / 9.24	1.500 / 8.355 / 9.15
	IV	1.040 / 6.719 / 11.31	1.240 / 6.907 / 11.07
	V	0.875 / 5.653 / 13.44	1.074 / 5.982 / 12.78
SUSPENSION/ WHEEL TRAVEL	Front	Kayaba air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.5 in. (140mm)	Showa air-spring, 39mm stanchion tube diameter, 3-position adjustable rebound damping, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/6.1 in. (154mm)
	Rear	single Kayaba air-spring shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/ 4.8 in. (122mm)	single Showa air-spring shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/5.1 in. (129mm)
BRAKES			
	Front	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.5-in. (266mm) effective disc diameter	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.2-in. (270mm) effective disc diameter
	Rear	single-action hydraulic caliper, 10.2-in. (259mm) effective disc diameter	single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.3-in. (288mm) effective disc diameter
TIRES			
	Front	110/90-18 61H Dunlop F-17 tubeless	M120/80-16 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G511 tubeless
	Rear	130/80-18 66H Dunlop K427 tubeless	M130/80-18 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G510 tubeless
DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES	Weight	502 lbs. (227.7kg)	511 lbs. (237.1kg)
	Weight distribution	48.1% front, 51.9% rear	47.2% front, 52.8% rear
	Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)	919 lbs. (417kg)	910 lbs. (413kg)
	Load capacity (with full fuel tank)	387 lbs. (176 kg)	362 lbs. (164kg)
	Wheelbase	58.6 to 59.7 in. (1489 to 1517mm)	59.6 to 61.2 in. (1514 to 1544mm)
	Seat height	31.1 in. (790mm)	32.3 in. (820mm)
	Handlebar width	25.8 in. (655mm)	adjustable from 26.2 to 27.6 in. (665 to 700mm)
	Footpeg height	14.9 in. (378mm)	13.7 in. (349mm)
	Ground clearance	6.3 in. (160mm), at exhaust header pipes	6.1 in. (155mm), at exhaust crossover
	Steering head angle	26.5 degrees from vertical	28.5 degrees from vertical
	Front wheel trail	4.06 in. (103mm)	3.78 in. (96mm)
	Frame	tubular mild steel, double front downtubes	box section and round mild-steel tubing, double front downtubes
	Oil capacity	3.7 qt. (3.5/)	3.2 qt. (3.0/)
	Fuel tank	steel, 5.0 gal. (19.0/), including 1.2 gal. (4.5/) reserve	steel, 6.1 gal. (23.0/), including 0.9 gal. (3.5/) reserve
	Instrumentation	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, voltmeter, LCD fuel gauge, LCD/bulb-type monitor system	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, fuel gauge, coolant temperature gauge
PERFORMANCE			
	Fuel consumption range	37 to 47 mpg (16 to 20 km/l)	26 to 43 mpg (11 to 18 km/l)
	Average fuel consumption	42 mpg (18 km/l)	35 mpg (15 km/l)
	Cruising range, maximum	185 to 235 miles (298 to 378km)	159 to 262 miles (256 to 422km)
	Cruising range, reserve only	44 to 56 miles (71 to 90km)	23 to 39 miles (37 to 63km)
	Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated	29 mph actual	29 mph actual
	Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated	52 mph actual	52 mph actual
	Best 1/4-mile acceleration	12.114 sec., 110.97 mph (179 km/h)	11.890 sec., 114.64 mph (184 km/h)
	Top speed (observed)	135 mph (217 km/h)	140 mph (225 km/h)
	Stopping distance from 30 mph	30 ft. (9.1m)	27 ft. (8.2m)
	Stopping distance from 60 mph	120 ft. (36.6m)	127 ft. (38.7m)
WARRANTY:		12 months, unlimited mileage	12 months unlimited mileage
AVAILABLE COLORS:		Firecracker Red; Quartz Silver	red-and-white; blue-and-white

Continued

Family Feud

WRIST-ROCKETS READY TO LAUNCH:

GPz550 vs. VF500F Interceptor

Not only a middleweight shootout but a property battle, too.

BY LARRY WORKS

• If the hyperbike comparison promised to be a rout, and the paired 750s showed signs of rewaging last year's Superbike Wars, then a face-off between the two smallest competitors in this family feud should've produced a reaction stronger than the casual mixture of matter and anti-matter. After all, for Honda to contest other displacement classes is one thing, but to dispute the 550 sportbike class is quite another. Whether in Box Stock racing or simple canyon-carving, the middleweight sport class has been Kawasaki's private domain for the past few years. Any incursion would be nigh onto criminal trespass.

Honda didn't see it that way, though, and entered this year's middleweight sport class with a vengeance. The name of the vengeance is the 500 Interceptor; and although it spots every other bike in its class—including the GPz550—some engine displacement, it is competitive in every way. In fact, the 500's particular combination of broad powerband, quick steering and light weight led us to call it the best Interceptor ever (April 1984 issue).

But Kawasaki hasn't been resting on its assets, and this year's GPz550 received its most extensive model-year changes ever. Most obvious is the inclusion of the half-fairing, bodywork and instrumentation that brings this year's 550 in line with updates made to the two larger GPzs in 1983. Also now in line is the 550's version of Uni-Trak rear suspension; the triangulated, round-tube steel swingarm has been replaced with an extruded aluminum unit; the Uni-Trak's rising-rate linkage now resides beneath the swingarm and mounts to the shock's bottom eye in the same manner as on the larger GPzs. And, as on the 750 and 1100, the 550

now has an anti-dive unit, actuated by brake-line hydraulic pressure, built onto the bottom of each fork slider.

Other significant changes were directed to the eight-valve, air-cooled, dohc motor. Kawasaki advanced the cam timing and increased its duration, replaced the centrifugal-type ignition advance used previously with an all-electronic unit that provides more spark advance at all engine speeds, and replaced last year's bank of 26mm Teikei Kikaki CV carbs with similar 27mm units. The result, Kawasaki claims, is five more horsepower and a power peak moved up to the engine's 10,500-rpm redline. Kawasaki wanted not only a quicker engine but quicker steering, too, and so replaced the 550's 19-inch front wheel with an 18-incher. Also, the steering head angle was steepened (from 27.5 degrees to 26 degrees, and the trail was reduced (from 110 to 95mm). All told, the GPz550 now accelerates harder and turns quicker than ever before, and is, like the VF500F, quite possibly the best of its line.

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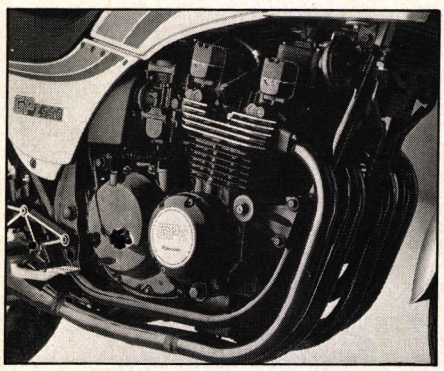
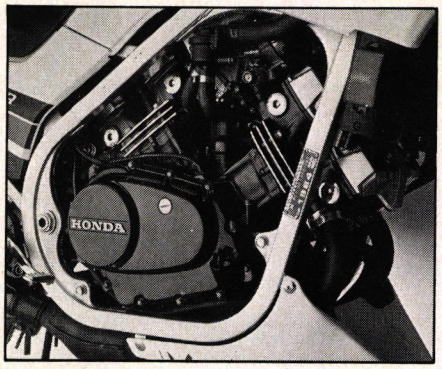
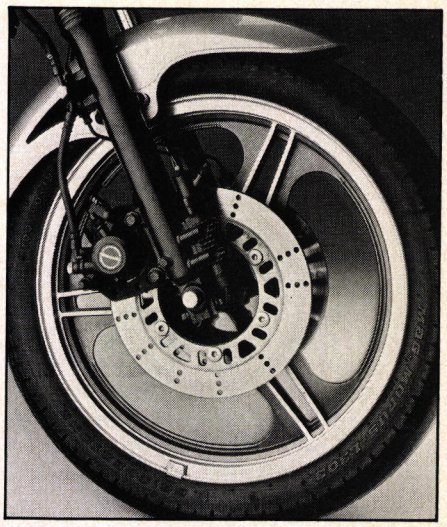
With two such superlative sportbikes, you could expect not only fierce competition but close competition as well. You wouldn't be wrong. In roll-on, top speed and in the quarter-mile, the differences be-





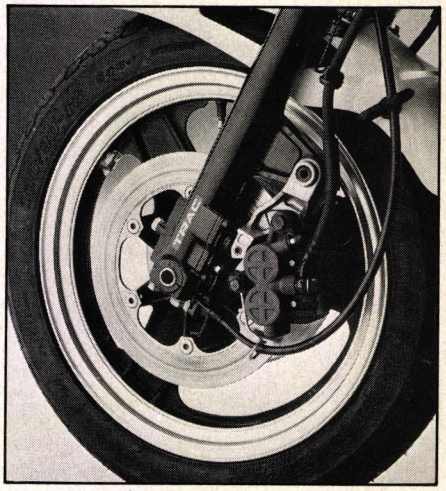
Both 550 and 500 serve up high-revving high performance

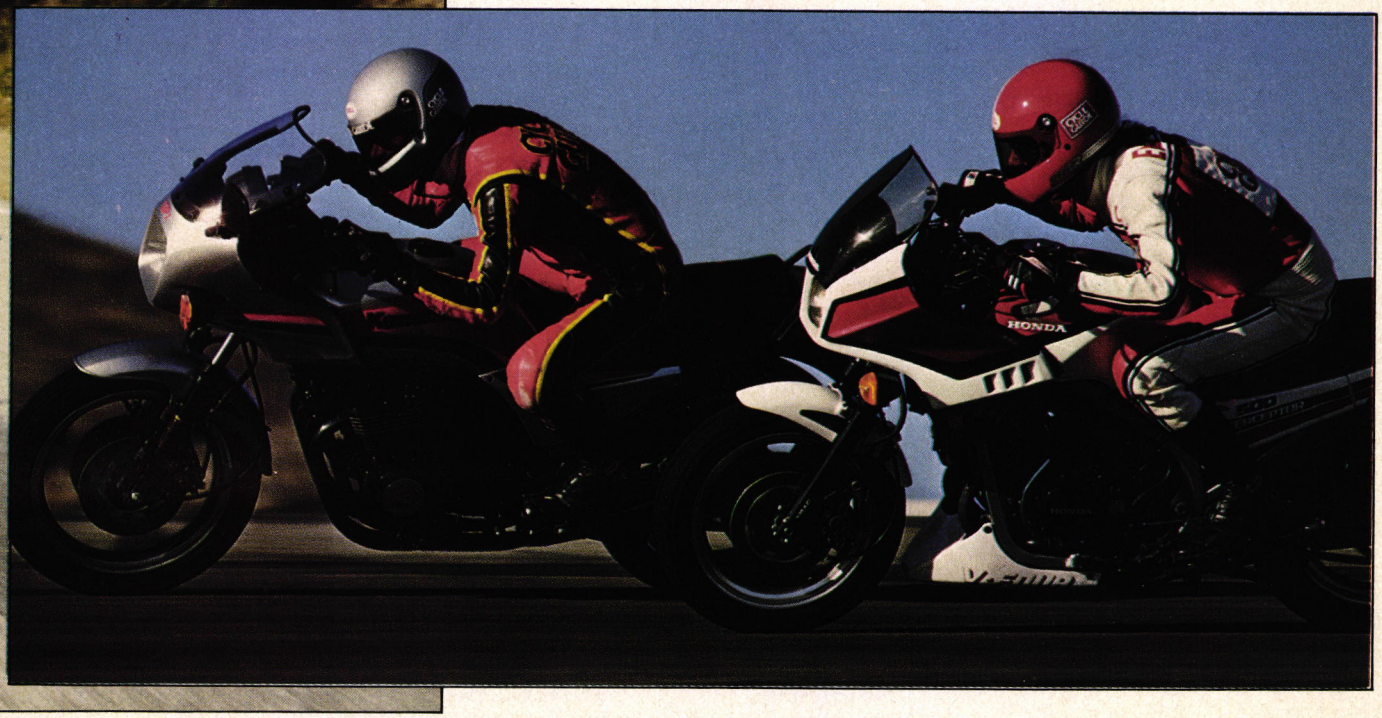
But one's a straight-up Old Fashioned and the other's got water on the side.



16 vs. 18: stability vs. quick steering?

Not mutually exclusive in the 500.





tween the bikes aren't more than an eye-blink or so—but the blink always goes to the 500. Roll-ons show that the 500 pulls about a bikelength ahead, then maintains that lead. The positions don't change much, even at top speed, because the 500 runs 127 mph when pulling redline in sixth gear—a feat that nets the Kawasaki 125 mph. And at the dragstrip, the Honda posted a 12.417/107.65, with the GPz's 12.559/105.38 not far behind.

Where the closeness between these two wrist-rockets starts to break down, though, is on a twisty backroad. There, the Honda clearly outmaneuvers the Kawasaki, more in high-speed corners than in tighter, slower turns. And if that seems odd, given that the Kawasaki's steering geometry is marginally quicker than the Honda's, remember that the VF, like all Interceptors, has a 16-inch front wheel that helps the bike react more quickly to rider input. The Honda changes lines easily on command, whereas the GPz prefers one line and resists changing attitude once set into a corner. And while that translates into considerable stability on the part of the Kawasaki, the Interceptor, despite its steering quickness, is at least as steady at speed.

What's more, the Interceptor's power is easier to use than the GPz's during full backroad blitzes, even though the Kawasaki has a 10-percent displacement advantage. Both bikes are capable of hard drives out of turns, but the GPz often requires a downshift or two to keep its engine making power, while the Interceptor usually needs nothing more than rolling open the throttle to insure a fast corner-exit. And while the Interceptor is nearly unflappable when cornering over bumpy, uneven pavement, the GPz is more easily upset by road-surface irregularities when banked over.

When you're not actively flogging along the backroads, though, the picture changes somewhat. The GPz's roomier seating position and dead-smooth, rubber-mounted engine make it a better choice for day-long freeway rides. Not that the Interceptor is exclusively a short-distance sprinter; there's only mild vibration through the bars and pegs, and while its bar/seat/pegs relationship is tight, it isn't debilitating.

Even so, the difference between the 500 and 550 is only slight on the freeway. And these are purebred sportbikes, after all, corner-carving, triple-distilled versions of this GPz vs. Interceptor confrontation; their long-haul capabilities are only a secondary concern. Where they'll be judged is on their sporting prowess. And in those tight confines, the results are clear: The Interceptor outruns and outhandles the GPz, and is even easier to ride. That's not too surprising, though, because when the VF500F entered Kawasaki's private middleweight domain, Honda planned on a changed title for the property—not joint occupancy. •

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

MOTORCYCLE	GPz550	VF500F Interceptor
IMPORTER	Kawasaki Motors Corp., 2009 East Edinger Avenue, Santa Ana, California 92711	American Honda Motor Company Inc. 100 West Alondra Boulevard Gardena, California 90247
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	$2899	$2898
ENGINE		
Type	four-stroke transverse vertical four	liquid-cooled four-stroke 90-degree tandem vee-four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	58.0mm x 52.4mm	60.0mm x 44.0mm
Displacement	553.8cc	497.6cc
Compression ratio	10.0:1	11.0:1
Engine redline	10,500 rpm	12,000 rpm
Carburetion	four 27mm Teikei Kikaki constant-vacuum	four 29mm Keihin constant-vacuum
Air filter	disposable paper element	disposable paper element
Lubrication	wet sump	wet sump
Starting system	electric only	electric only
Ignition	transistorized breakerless	transistorized breakerless
Charging system	12-volt; 260-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 12-ampere-hour battery	12-volt; 260-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 12-ampere-hour battery
DRIVETRAIN		
Primary drive		straight-cut gears; 2.057:1 ratio
Clutch	wet, multi-plate	wet, multi-plate
Crankshaft-to-jackshaft drive	inverted-tooth chain; 1.174:1 ratio	
Jackshaft-to-transmission drive	straight-cut gears; 2.500:1 ratio	
Final drive	#520 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ¼-in. width); 2.375:1 (38/16) ratio	#530 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.933:1 (44/14) ratio
Gear —	Internal gear ratio / Overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM	Internal gear ratio / Overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.571 / 17.923 / 4.18	3.308 / 19.960 / 3.70
II	1.778 / 12.391 / 6.04	2.353 / 14.198 / 5.20
III	1.381 / 9.625 / 7.78	1.850 / 11.163 / 6.62
IV	1.125 / 7.841 / 9.55	1.545 / 9.322 / 7.93
V	0.962 / 6.702 / 11.18	1.333 / 8.043 / 9.29
VI	0.852 / 5.973 / 12.62	1.154 / 6.963 / 10.61
SUSPENSION/ WHEEL TRAVEL		
Front	Showa air-spring, 36mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/6.2 in. (158mm)	Showa air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.6 in. (142mm)
Rear	single Showa shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 17mm spring preload range/5.0 in. (128mm)	single Showa air-spring shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/4.4 in. (112mm)
BRAKES		
Front	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.1-in. (256mm) effective disc diameter	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 9.8-in. (250mm) effective disc diameter
Rear	single-action hydraulic caliper, 10.1-in. (256mm) effective disc diameter	single-action hydraulic caliper, 10.6-in. (270mm) effective disc diameter
TIRES		
Front	100/90-18 56H Bridgestone Mag Mopus L303 tubeless	110/90-16 54H Bridgestone Mag Mopus G511 tubeless
Rear	120/80-18 62H Bridgestone Mag Mopus G508 tubeless	110/90-18 61H Bridgestone Mag Mopus G512 tubeless
DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES		
Weight	436 lbs. (197.8kg)	419 lbs. (190.0kg)
Weight distribution	49.1% front, 50.9% rear	48.2% front, 51.8% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)	870 lbs. (395kg)	790 lbs. (358kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank)	405 lbs. (184kg)	344 lbs. (156kg)
Wheelbase	55.8 to 57.1 in. (1418 to 1450mm)	55.3 to 56.8 in. (1404 to 1442mm)
Seat height	31.0 in. (788mm)	31.5 in. (801mm)
Handlebar width	25.6 in. (650mm)	adjustable from 26.6 to 28.0 in. (675 to 710mm)
Footpeg height	15.3 in. (388mm)	13.9 in. (354mm)
Ground clearance	6.4 in. (162mm), at header-pipe clamp	5.6 in. (141mm), at exhaust crossover
Steering head angle	26.0 degrees from vertical	27.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	3.74 in. (95mm)	3.70 in. (94mm)
Frame	tubular mild steel, double front downtubes	box-section and round mild-steel tubing, double front downtubes
Oil capacity	3.2 qt. (3.0/)	2.6 qt. (2.5/)
Fuel tank	steel, 4.8 gal. (18.0/), including 1.2 gal. (4.5/) reserve	steel, 4.5 gal. (17.0/), including 1.2 gal. (4.5/) reserve
Instrumentation	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter reset table to zero, tachometer, voltmeter, LCD fuel gauge, LCD/bulb- type monitor system	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge
PERFORMANCE		
Fuel consumption range	32 to 56 mpg (14 to 24 km/l)	33 to 48 mpg (14 to 20 km/l)
Average fuel consumption	41 mpg (17 km/l)	38 mpg (16 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum	154 to 269 miles (248 to 433km)	149 to 216 miles (240 to 348km)
Cruising range, reserve only	38 to 67 miles (61 to 108km)	40 to 58 miles (64 to 93km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated	29 mph actual	27 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated	52 mph actual	49 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration	12.559 sec., 105.38 mph (170km/h)	12.417 sec., 107.65 mph (173km/l)
Top speed (observed)	125 mph (201 km/h)	127 mph (204 km/l)
Stopping distance from 30 mph	33 ft. (10.1mm)	30 ft. (9.1m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	136 ft. (41.5m)	123 ft. (37.5m)
WARRANTY:	12 months unlimited mileage	12 months unlimited mileage
AVAILABLE COLORS:	Firecracker Red, Quartz Silver	red-and-white; blue-and-white

SHAKING THE FAMILY TREES:

When The Dust Had Settled

In the end, it wasn't just how fast they went; it was how they went fast.

BY LARRY WORKS

• By now, you might feel as if you're experiencing triple-vision. That's probably not the case, though; it's just that with three matchups of Interceptors and GPzs, there's bound to be some overlap. That's triply true, because in this family feud, each of the model-lines is remarkably consistent. While the Interceptors aren't identical, visually or technologically, they're very close; and the GPzs are virtual sportbike clones caught in various stages of growth.

That repetition carried over to the conclusion of each comparison, as well, because when it came time to draw the bottom line, the Hondas won, straight across. But the cleanness of Honda's sweep tends to mask the closeness of the competition. And in each case, the traits that were common to one model-line or another, not individual machine characteristics, determined the outcome.

For instance, the GPzs are exciting, high-revving transverse-fours that give off racy, blood-boiling noises as they make horsepower. The Hondas, on the other hand, all have higher redlines than their GPz counterparts, but emit little more than a flat drone as audible proof of their engine performance. More to the point, while all the GPzs have distinct powerbands, each of the Interceptors seems to make power all the time. In each test, when the GPz was kept in its powerband, there was no clear engine advantage for either Honda or Kawasaki; but the GPz consistently had to be worked harder to keep it making power. So while the GPzs provide all the aggressive, hot-rod sensations you could ask for when you push them hard, the Hondas will go just as fast—or faster—with less effort.

At the dragstrip, though, the proof of the bikes' performance was provided by the unwinking eye of the Chrondek timers; and what mattered there wasn't how fast the bikes felt, but how fast they went. And in every case, the Interceptors nipped the GPzs through the lights in both elapsed time and terminal speed. That same consistency showed up in top speeds, too. The 500 posted 127 mph to the 550's 125, the VF750 turned 140 to the GPz750's 135, and the 1000 ran belly-to-the-ground at a red-hot 150 mph to the 1100's 145.

In many ways, however, the sharpest difference between GPz and Interceptor isn't what the bikes can do at their outer limits of performance, but the amount of rider input required to sustain such high speeds in anything other than a straight line. In each of the matchups—500 vs. 550, 750 vs. 750 and

Continued

certainly the 1000 vs. 1100—it's simply not possible to find those differences in absolute performance on public pavement. But even if you can't fully explore those far reaches of performance on the open road aboard any of these bikes, you can still ride faster longer on the Interceptors.

That's so because all the VFs, as a group, demand less-pronounced rider inputs during fast riding. On any of the VFs, on any stretch of twisty road, you have to shift less, use less brake and exert less pressure on the handlebars than on the corresponding model of GPz. Interestingly, however, the Interceptors' agility and quick steering response doesn't come at the expense of stability; the Hondas match the Kawasakis in rock-steadiness at speed. To be sure, all six bikes are to-the-core, 100-percent-serious sport machines, and you can ride blisteringly fast on any of them; but the Kawasakis require more concentration, more rider input and are more upset by every control application than the Interceptors.

Consistent family traits also are evident in how the bikes react to cornering with the brakes applied. To a machine, the Interceptors preferred to have all the braking done before the turn, while the GPzs could be slowed while heeled-over without complaint. And in hard stopping, the brakes on the Interceptors offered better feel than those on the Kawasakis—although, curiously, the Interceptors gave no shorter braking distances in panic stops.

Lest this start looking like a rout, remember that even at very fast street speeds, around eight-tenths or so, the differences between GPz and Interceptor will be less clear, perhaps even coming down simply to a question of personal preference. And there's still a great deal to be said in favor of the GPzs. For instance, in dealing with concerns other than those of pure sportbiking, the Kawasakis all bettered the Hondas in fuel mileage. And, in the case of the smallest pair, sheer physical size played an important part. The 500 might easily be considered cramped by some, and the relative roominess of the GPz550 adds a dimension of long-distance comfort simply not available on the VF500F.

If that sounds like damning the Kawasakis with faint praise, it shouldn't. As a group, the GPzs all are excellent sportbikes, rolling, high-performance proof that reports of the demise of transverse-four sportbikes were greatly exaggerated. And for riders who aren't concerned with finding the last erg of performance their bike offers, or for those who simply prefer their street performance with four cylinders straight across, any one of these GPzs is a good choice. But if you're looking for the absolute cutting edge of street performance, there's one thing you should know: The Interceptor family was the only one left standing when this feud came to an end. ●

VIEWPOINT:

A Gathering of the Clan

The Hatfields and McCoys never had it so good.

• Last month I boldly proclaimed the GPz550 to be the performance equal of the VF500 Interceptor. I was wrong. As much as illustrating my own shortsightedness, however, the error evidences the difficulties in choosing between these two first families of sportbikes. After nearly 15 years of riding, the sharp-edged temperament of an inline-four has become almost second nature. I'm familiar with their quirks, and I know just how to crack the whip over them on a twisty road.

But experience almost becomes a liability in assessing Honda's new vee-four sportbikes. The no-strings power and neutral handling of the Interceptors feels so guileless and relaxing that you find yourself coming up fast on a GPz and passing by with a vague sense of wonder at what is causing all the ruckus going on next door.

I still have some adapting to do with the 1000 and 750, but the VF500 is so perfect that I could only have maligned it in the first place out of sheer Future Shock. The pen is mightier than the sword, yes. But mightier still is the retraction. *—Paul Gordon*

• After riding all six of these motorcycles, the outcome of the comparison was clear, for me, at least. The Interceptors win every skirmish in this two-wheel version of the Hatfields and McCoys, and it has to do with two fundamental qualities: handling and horsepower.

Not just the sheer amount of horsepower, mind you, although the Hondas showed they had their share by outrunning each of their GPz counterparts at the dragstrip. More important, though, is the VFs' amazingly broad spread of power. Such docile, easily managed motors make the Interceptors supremely easy to ride, whether you're trolling through traffic or running hard and fast on the backroads. The VFs excel, too, with their quick-response handling, which can be critical when you're charging along on unfamiliar roads. When you need to change directions right now, the Interceptors follow your every command; the GPzs feel slow to respond.

Certainly Kawasaki's GPzs are fast, capable motorcycles in their own right, but Honda's Interceptors simply outgun and out-corner them through every turn. *—Charles Everitt*

• While this comparison might seem obvious, to me there's no comparison between the Interceptors and their GPz counterparts. Bike for bike, the Honda vee-fours are superior in practically every performance category, measured on or off the racetrack.

But being first to the finish line is a criterion for judging racebikes only, not sportbikes. And what I see here are six sportbikes, so for me the emphasis is on fun, not just speed. And with that in mind, the comparison favors the Kawasakis. You see, the GPzs respond—in steering, handling, even engine kinesthetics—like traditional high-strung sportbikes. The GPzs make me feel like I'm part of the bike, whereas with the Interceptors, I feel like I'm just along for the ride.

With one exception: the VF500F Interceptor. Because while the miniCeptor reflects Honda's no-nonsense, Eighties-generation design, it still provides the kinesthetics of a traditional sportbike. Enough so that I include it with the Kawasakis, because I judge a sportbike on how it goes fast, not how fast it goes.
—Dain Gingerelli

• Riding the GPzs and Interceptors back- to-back left me with one distinct impression: This comparison is unfair from the outset, because the GPzs are mired in Mr. Newton's physics, but the Interceptors obey some other law.

How can you explain a 1000 that can keep up with an 1100 on the top end, yet will stomp the larger bike in any kind of roll-on contest? Or a 750 that seems to shed 100 pounds at anything above a walking pace? How can someone design a 500 that will turn faster than a rat with sneakers but remain rock-steady when the cornering speeds approach triple digits? Against that kind of performance, the GPzs never had a chance.

Such a one-sided contest would be easier to explain if the Interceptors were up against a group of second-rate sportbikes, but that's not the case. The GPzs are the premier Japanese canyon-carvers of the past few years. But in every case, the Interceptor will outrun its GPz counterpart.

As far as I can see, there's one explanation: Someone at Honda has studied the fine print, and discovered a loophole in the laws of physics. *—Jim Miller*

Nava '84

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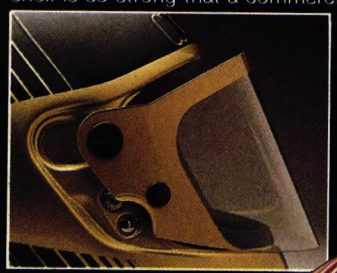

Unlike fiberglass shells that are designed to delaminate (break) during an impact, the Fibernava spreads the shock out over the universe of the shell, much like a trapeze net gently absorbs the impact of a falling person. Therefore, the Fibernava will willingly absorb multiple impacts in the same spot with little or no loss in impact absorption quality. Expensive? of course. But one look at the bold graphics, scratch-resistant automatic shield, and plush interior will show you that simply no compromises were made in the construction of this helmet. SNELL '80 and DOT approved, naturally. There's one more thing you get with a Fibernava that comes with no other helmet—the intense pleasure of owning the very best!

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LESS IS MORE.

ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET AND EYE PROTECTION. The 600 Interceptor has a 12-month unlimited mileage

SAE net taken at the crankshaft. California version differs slightly due to emissions equip- ment. Rear view mirrors are standard equipment. © 1983 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. For a

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Forged of the same advanced technology that made the 1983 750 Interceptor™ the "Bike of the Year."*

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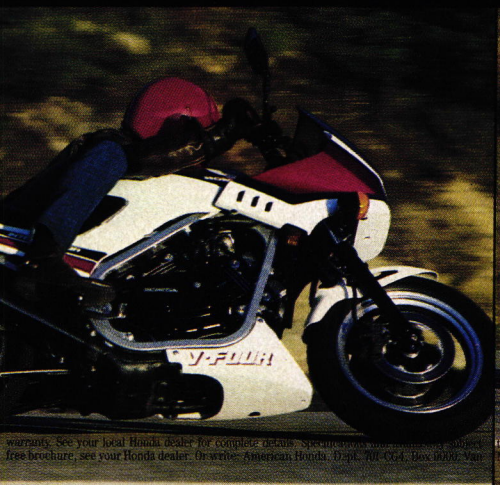
And armed with the razor-sharp performance of an incredible 68† horsepower.

The new 500 Interceptor.™

It took Honda to cut the superbike down to size.

HONDA

FOLLOW THE LEADER



warranty. See your local Honda dealer for complete details. Specifications and equipment subject to change without notice.
free brochure, see your Honda dealer. Or write: American Honda, Dept. AH-CG1, Box 1000, Van Nuys, CA 91409. *Cycle Guide* magazine, August 1983. *Motorcyclist* magazine, October 1983.

You have 16 chances to WIN THE BIKE OF YOUR CHOICE: IN CYCLE GUIDE'S ALL NEW BIGGER AND BETTER -MORE PRIZES THAN EVER-

1984 $

CYCLE GUIDE invites you to enter this **ALL NEW 1984 SUPER $60,000 MOTORCYCLE SWEEPSTAKES.** You may be one of **TWO LUCKY GRAND PRIZE WINNERS** to drive away on the **DELUXE TOURING BIKE** of your choice.

Or maybe you'll win one of 489 other great prizes—including Hyperbikes, Motocrossers, Enduros, and Street Middleweights. With a total of 16 bikes to be given away, you have 16 chances to WIN that special motorcycle you've always wanted. **SEND YOUR ENTRY TODAY!**

And if you like, you may subscribe to CYCLE GUIDE for only 58¢ an issue. You don't have to buy a thing to enter, but you should know about CYCLE GUIDE'S LOWEST POSSIBLE RATE—

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Whether you order or not is up to you, but either way send in your **1984 SUPER $60,000 MOTORCYCLE SWEEPSTAKES ENTRY TODAY!** This is a brand new contest—even if you entered last summer, you'll want to send in your entry right away. It could make you the proud owner of one of these fabulous prizes:

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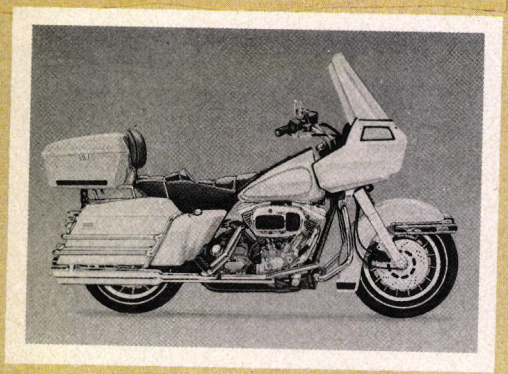
50% OFF THE REGULAR SUBSCRIPTION PRICE AND A WHOPPING 61% OFF THE COVER PRICE—ONLY 58¢ AN ISSUE

Just select the FULL-DRESS TOURING BIKE of your choice on your Official Entry Form, order CYCLE GUIDE if you wish, complete, stamp and mail today!

2 GRAND PRIZES The Full-Dress Touring Bike Of Your Choice:



***KAWASAKI 1300 VOYAGER** The unchallenged King of Cubic Stuff. Simply the biggest, most entertaining, most elaborately equipped over-the-road motorcycle ever built.

*** HARLEY-DAVIDSON FLT CLASSIC** Probably the best 2-wheeled sightseeing platform ever built. It allows you to effortlessly 'ease on down the road' in classic American style and comfort.

*** HONDA GL1200A ASPENCADE** The bike that originated 'turn-key touring' is bigger and better than ever with more power, improved handling, an all-new sound system, high-tech instrumentation and sleeker styling.

*** YAMAHA 1200 VENTURE ROYALE** It adds a dimension never before found in a full-dress touring machine: sporty back-road handling. And the awesome vee-four engine is smooth, torquey and incredibly fast.

25 THIRD PRIZES

NAVA GRAND PRIX HELMETS Nava's all-new fiberglass helmet—with crisp, racy Italian styling, colorful graphics and sleek aerodynamics. Precision computer molded fiberglass shell lined with soft brushed velour and supple padding guarantee long lasting comfort.

4 FIRST PRIZES The Hyperbike Of Your Choice:

*** HONDA VF1000F INTERCEPTOR** Take one 750cc Interceptor, 1983's Bike of the Year, and give it a 33% increase in displacement, and you've got what some think is the ultimate sport motorcycle—of all time!

*** KAWASAKI GPz900R** Its all-new, 16-valve, liquid-cooled engine is 'only' a 900, but with 125 hp on tap, its performance takes a backseat to no bike of any size.

*** SUZUKI GS1150ES** The finest hyperbike on earth for the past four years now has an even bigger engine, an all-new single-shock chassis and dramatic new styling. It looks as fast as it actually is.

*** YAMAHA FJ1100** Packed with GP-racing know-how, Yamaha's first liter-class sportbike threatens to do on the street what so many Yamaha racers have done on the track: whip the competition.

SUPER 60,000 00 MOTORCYCLE SWEEPSTAKES

TWO GRAND PRIZES–Win The Full-Dress Touring Bike Of Your Choice

ENTER TODAY – All Prizes Will Be Awarded – No Purchase Necessary – No Entry Fee!

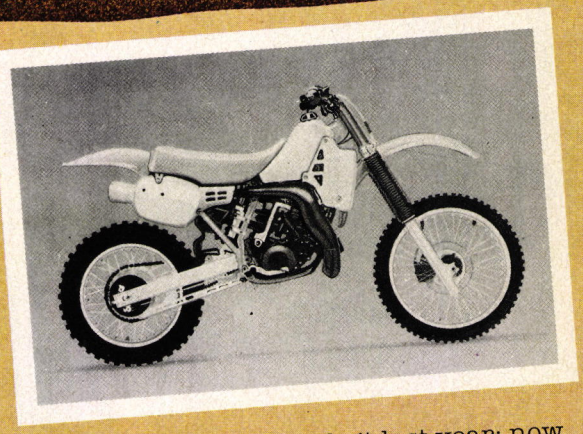
10 SECOND PRIZES Your Choice Of:

STREET MIDDLEWEIGHT

* **HONDA VF500F INTERCEPTOR** The instant you climb on, you feel—and act—like Freddie Spencer, World Champion roadracer.
* **KAWASAKI GPz550** One ride and you know why it's become the world's most popular 550-class street hot-rod.
* **SUZUKI GS550ES** So fast and agile, it's hard to believe this is only a 550cc street machine instead of a racebike.
* **YAMAHA RZ350LC** They call it the Kenny Roberts Special. It's not just like a real racebike, it **is** a real racebike—with lights.

MOTOCROSSER

* **HONDA CR250R** Able to make a winner out of almost anyone.
* **KAWASAKI KX250** A product of Team Green's Supercross success.
* **YAMAHA YZ250** High-tech, high-powered and ready to win.



* **SUZUKI RM250** Barnett rode it last year; now it's your turn.

ENDURO

* **KAWASAKI KDX200** If you can't do it on the KDX, you can't do it at all.
* **HONDA XR200R** No longer just a playbike but a serious enduro racer.
* **YAMAHA IT200** Bigger, stronger and faster than ever for '84.

50 FOURTH PRIZES

ECLIPSE TANK BAG
America's first and finest. Mounts securely and quickly on a neoprene pad that protects your tank. 5 pockets offer 1200 cu. in. of truly versatile luggage. Includes a removable belt pouch and non-glare map case.

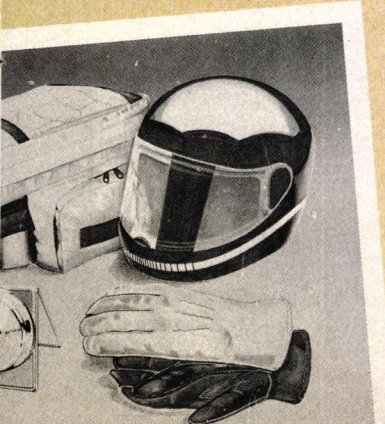
100 FIFTH PRIZES

ESPRIT RAIN GAUNTLET GLOVES
Comfortable, dependable and made from high-grade leather, with double-stitched seams and curved palms to minimize hand fatigue.

300 SIXTH PRIZES

ECLIPSE NIGHT RIDER
A bright, flashing roadside warning light that's visible for hundreds of feet. Powered by wafer-thin batteries, the complete unit is less than 4" x 3-1/2" x 1" in size.

One Entry gives you 491 Chances to Win one of 491 total Prizes—with a total value over $60,000



OFFICIAL SWEEPSTAKES RULES

1. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY! Use the enclosed card to enter, or print your name, address and zip code on a 3"x5" piece of paper. Mail each entry separately to CYCLE GUIDE, 1984 SUPER $60,000.00 MOTORCYCLE SWEEPSTAKES, P.O. Box 944, Farmingdale, NY 11737.

2. All prizes will be awarded in a drawing to be held under the supervision of an independent Certified Public Accountant before August 12, 1984. Decisions of the Judges are final. Winners will be notified by mail within 30 days of Drawing.

3. All entries must be postmarked by June 29, 1984 and received by July 12, 1984 to be eligible for Drawing.

4. You may win one of a total of 491 prizes—2 Grand Prizes, 4 First Prizes, 10 Second Prizes, 25 Third Prizes, 50 Fourth Prizes, 100 Fifth Prizes, 300 Sixth Prizes. All are guaranteed to be awarded.

5. Only 1 Major Prize per household. Prizes based upon availability at participating dealer. Substitution upon mutual agreement of prize winner and participating dealer of motorcycle of equal value. Sales tax is the sole responsibility of prizewinner.

6. **CYCLE GUIDE'S ALL NEW 1984 SUPER $60,000 MOTORCYCLE SWEEPSTAKES** is open to Residents of the United States. All Federal, State and Local laws apply; void where prohibited. Employees of Cycle Guide Inc., their families and their respective agencies and affiliates are not eligible.

7. A partial list of prize winners will be available after September 1, 1984.

CATCH 'EM IF YOU CAN

Riding in the wind, it's just you, the bike and endless miles of exciting road ahead. You can't be beat. Count on the outstanding performance of Bridgestone motorcycle tires. Bridgestone Team Mag Mopus is an unbeatable combination for the street that delivers remarkable stability and response.

G512 is a tough low-profile rear tire that grabs and holds the road with an extra-wide footprint. The unique tread design channels water out and away for less shimmy and hydroplaning. L303P with linked block tread is the front tire experienced street riders demand. Bridgestone's design provides for maximum steering control, wet traction, and neutral cornering.

The Bridgestone Team Mag Mopus, tubeless/tube type with raised white letters in most popular sizes...catch 'em now.

BRIDGESTONE

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GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

BY JOE KRESS

COMING SOON

• The K100s are on the way. Those much-talked-about, highly anticipated new BMWs we covered with a Riding Impression in the February '84 issue should be in dealers' showrooms by mid-July, months sooner than the company had first announced. The liquid-cooled, inline-four K100s are a total departure from the current line of BMWs, and will be the marque's flagships for the future. In preparation for the arrival of the K-series, mechanics will be required to undergo factory training to learn the intricacies of the K100s before being allowed to work on the new bikes. The K100 series—including the RS and RT—will replace the current R100 boxer twins, but BMW will continue to offer opposed-twins in 650cc and 800cc sizes.

• While the K100 marks a new beginning for BMW, it also ends the reign of the R100 opposed-twin. For its last year of production, the 980cc boxer-twin will be offered in the same four versions as in years past. Not surprisingly, changes made to these last examples of the R100, R100CS, R100RS, and R100RT are minimal. But BMW isn't closing the book on these bikes without some fanfare (see "R100 Swan Song," page 49). It's only fitting.

• Don't look for any monumental revamps on the '84 versions of the three 800cc BMWs, either. The two newest versions of the R80, the RT and ST, added to the lineup last year, are essentially unchanged for 1984; the dual-purpose R80G/S also returns—with a bit more glory this time. Modified versions of the R80G/S continue to set the pace in the tortuous Paris-to-Dakar rally, and finished first, second, and fifth in this year's running. (See "The North African Campaign," page 87.)

• Rounding out this year's BMW lineup are two 650cc models: the R65 and the R65LS. For 1984, options in the R65 line are limited to either a black or a blue finish for the standard model and either red or silver for the sportier LS. And the LS buyer has the choice of either a high or low handlebar.

• At the Milan motorcycle show last November, Moto Guzzi unveiled its new models. Since then, Moto Guzzi has added a few more bikes to its lineup. The three new additions are the V35 Imola, V50 Monza II and the V75. The common denominator for these three newest Guzzis is the cylinder-head design: These bikes all have four-valve heads mounted on their vee-twin engines. And the 350cc V35 and 500cc V50 also share similar

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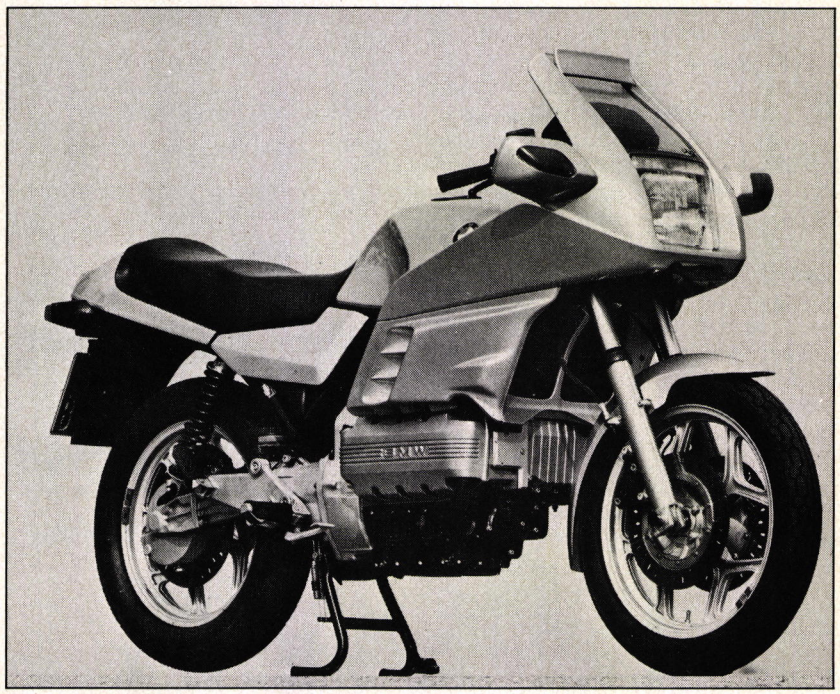
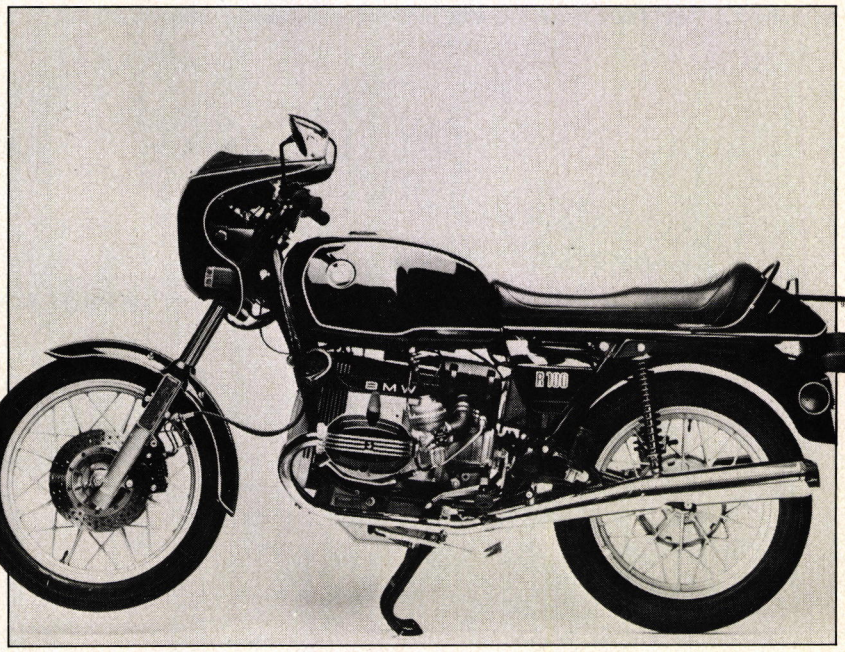


Fuel-injected liquid-cooled fours are BMW's latest stock in trade

And the K100s will be showing off that new hardware sooner than expected.



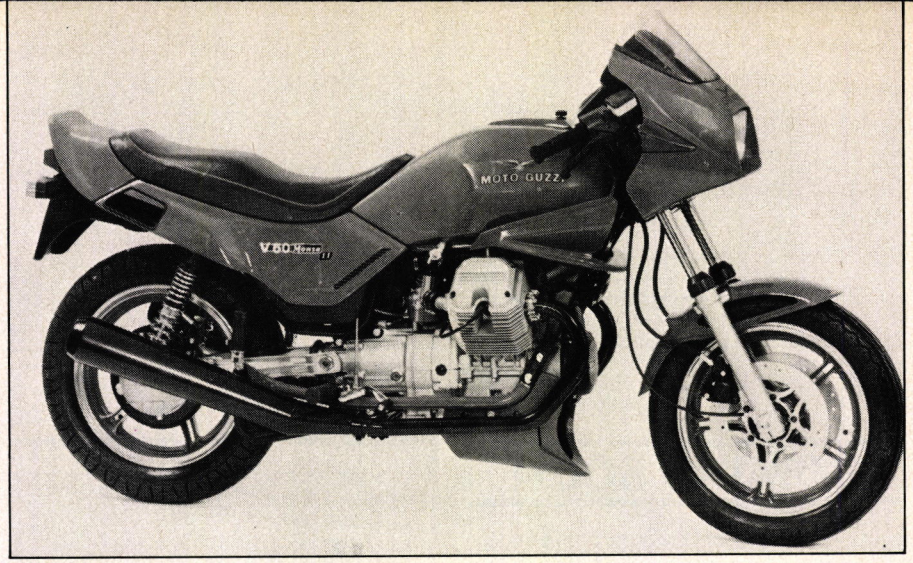
The introduction of one new BMW means the end of the line for others

But the soon-to-be-discontinued R100s won't be leaving without fanfare.

styling. These two are pure-sport, low-bar Italobikes with features such as 16-inch front wheels, handlebar-mounted quarter-fairings, lower cowl fairings and upswept tailsections. The 750cc V75 Guzzi, however, is styled in a more upright, traditional manner, but it, too, mounts a sporty mini-fairing and a 16-inch front wheel.

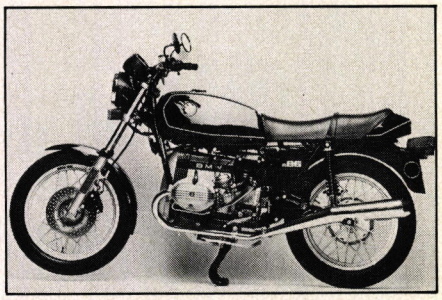
• You might think an 1100cc Suzuki-powered Egli would be unusual enough for even the most exotic tastes. But it's apparently not exotic enough for Egli's West German importer, Reinhold Kraft. The German firm's desire for a truly different machine has produced the Egli-Kraft. The machine is based on a standard—if such a term applies—Egli rolling chassis, and the bikes are wrapped in all-new bodywork designed by Hans Muth of Suzuki Katana and BMW fame. The Egli-Kraft, reportedly capable of 150-mph top speeds and mid-10-second quarter-mile times, undoubtedly won't be found on every streetcorner—even in Germany. This roadburner is being produced in very limited quantities.

• A few months back we told you about a high-performance kit developed by Slater Bros. Great Britain for the 120-degree crank, triple-cylinder Laverda. Now Slater Bros. has gone one step further, by saving customers the bother of installing the high-compression pistons, special camshafts and the high-performance exhaust system that make up the kit. Those parts, along with a twin-headlight, endurance-racing-inspired fairing, are now



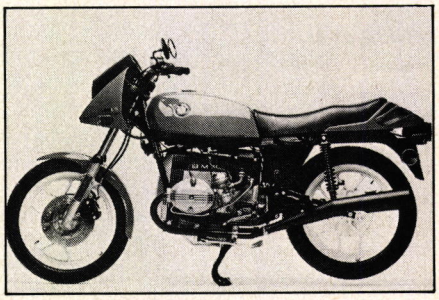
Moto Guzzi finally has its four-valver

This V50 Monza is the midsize version.



R65 is the smallest Beemer for the U.S.

And it's the least expensive one, too.



BMW's sporty 650 has a few options for '84

Two color choices and two bar heights.

TECHNICAL KNOCKOUT.

"The best new bike deal of 1983."
MOTORCYCLIST Magazine, Apr. 1983

The Suzuki GR650D's technical innovation and low price were so well liked at *Motorcyclist*, they just had to call it "The best new bike deal of 1983."

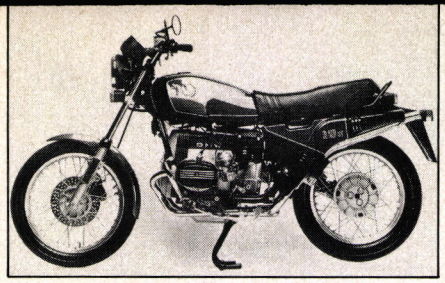
And now it happens to be selling for far less than ever before...during the Suzuki Knockout Savings Sale. In fact, there's a whole range of Suzuki street bikes on sale, most at hundreds of dollars off.

However, nothing lasts forever. Including the Knockout Savings Sale. So the sooner you get to your Suzuki dealer, the better. Because these prices can only stay in the ring so long before it's all over.

SUZUKI

The Supplier of Motorcycles and All-Terrain Vehicles to the 1984 Olympic Games.

The Sensation of Suzuki.



available already mounted in—and on—a factory-fresh Jota. As icing on the cake, Slater Bros. Great Britain will sell the bikes with a standard Laverda warranty.

• In another bit of Laverda news, that Italian company has just announced its decision to fit Pirelli's new MP7 radial tires as standard equipment on the RGS Corsa. Right now, the supersport Corsa is the only model in the Laverda line using the new tires.

• More news of radial tires for motorcycles comes from Michelin. That French company

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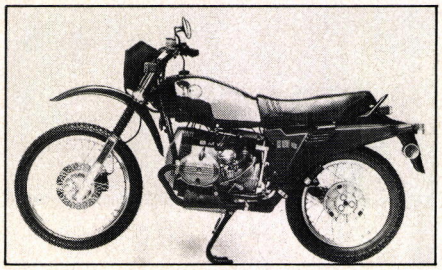
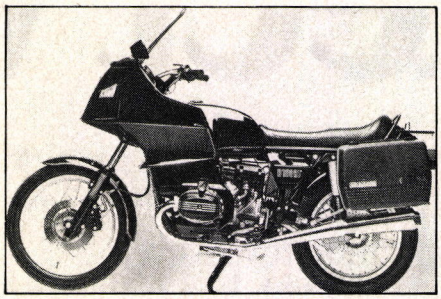


BMW's 800cc twin still has a future

Powering bikes like the G/S and ST.



Top-of-the-line tourer bows out

This will be the last year for the R100.

BMW R100—1976-1984:

Swan Song

Going out in style.

• BMW plans to release a few new models in the U.S. before debuting the K100. Leading that all-new, inline-four to the showrooms will be special Last Edition versions of the R100-series; only 740 of the special R100s will be made.

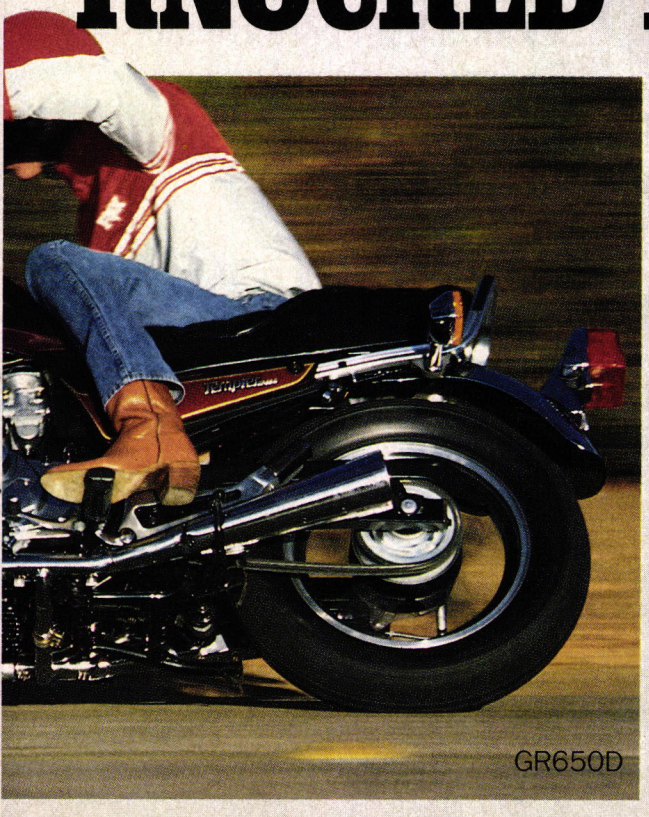
And the Last Edition R100s will be special, indeed. For starters, each one will be numbered, with the owner receiving a commemorative certificate noting the bike's exact date of manufacture, and pinpointing its position in the final production run, whether it's the last one made, next to the last or 40th from the last.

That's information only the owner will know, but everyone else still will be able to spot the bikes as Last Edition models. Although the Last Edition bikes will be offered in the standard R100 versions, all 740 will have a custom pearl-white finish, set off with the distinctive red, blue and purple BMW Motorsports graphics. And as final touches, all the bikes will have a Last Edition badge, as well as BMW's sporty three-quarter saddle.

An opposed-twin has always powered the flagship model for BMW, a tradition that dates back to the company's first motorcycle, in 1923. With the introduction of the K100, the opposed-twin's status will change, but BMW hasn't forgotten its beginnings. The Last Edition R100s are a closing tribute to that 980cc boxer-twin. Interested collectors would be advised to sign up early—it'll be their last chance.

— *Joe Kress*

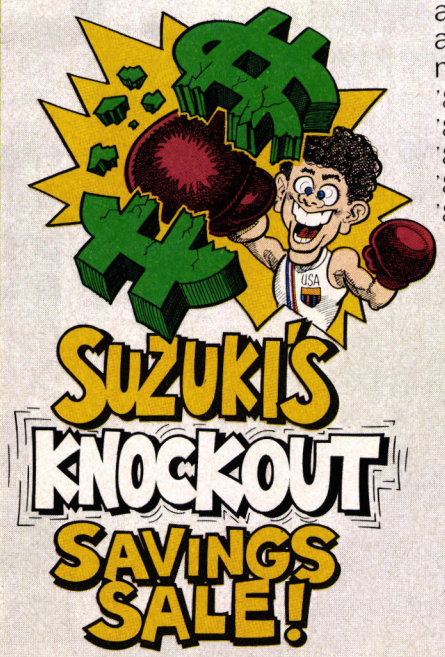
KNOCKED-DOWN PRICES.



'83 GR650D NOW $2079

Suzuki's knock-out savings also apply to these as well as other selected Suzuki models.

'83 GR650XD	NOW $1899
'82 GS450TXZ	NOW $1189
'82 GS450LZ	NOW $1299
'83 GS450GAD	NOW $1949
'82 GS550LZ	NOW $1799



Manufacturer's suggested retail price. Actual price set by dealers. Taxes, license, freight, options and other dealer charges extra. Prices may change without notice. Availability is limited.

The perfect w

Some people like to spend their weekends opening up a beer, leaning into a soft chair and watching the ball games.

Others get their kicks opening up a bike, leaning into a sharp turn and watching the scenery blur.

If the latter sounds like you, this sounds like your bike.

Introducing the all new Yamaha FJ600.

No frills flight.

It doesn't take an arsenal of space age gadgetry to make a bike go faster.

Just more power and less weight.

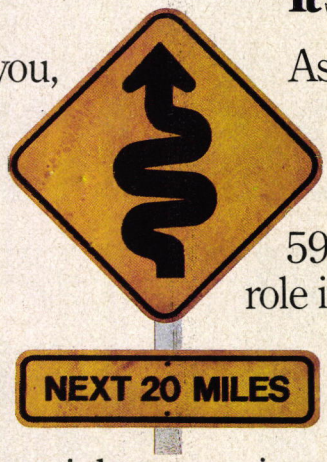
At one horse per 5.8 lbs.*, the FJ600's power-to-weight ratio is something you'll be hearing a lot about this year.

Mostly from companies trying to explain why theirs isn't as good.

The answer, unlike their bikes, is simple.

Simple, functional technology designed with just one thing in mind. Giving you the fastest, best handling middleweight motorcycle ever.

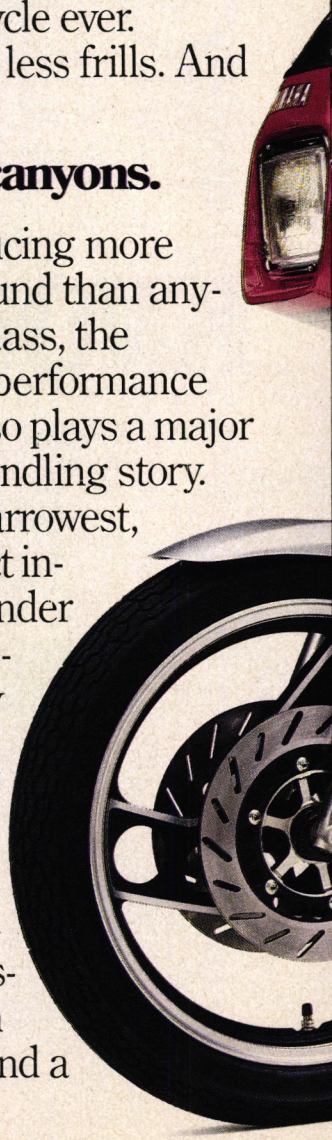
A motorcycle with less frills. And more thrills.



It's 49° in the canyons.

As well as producing more power-per-pound than anything in its class, the FJ600's high performance 598cc engine also plays a major role in the bike's handling story.

It's the narrowest, most compact in-line four-cylinder engine available. A design made possible by positioning the alternator behind, not to the side of, the cylinders. And one which, when combined with a Monoshock rear suspension, a race-proven double cradle frame and a

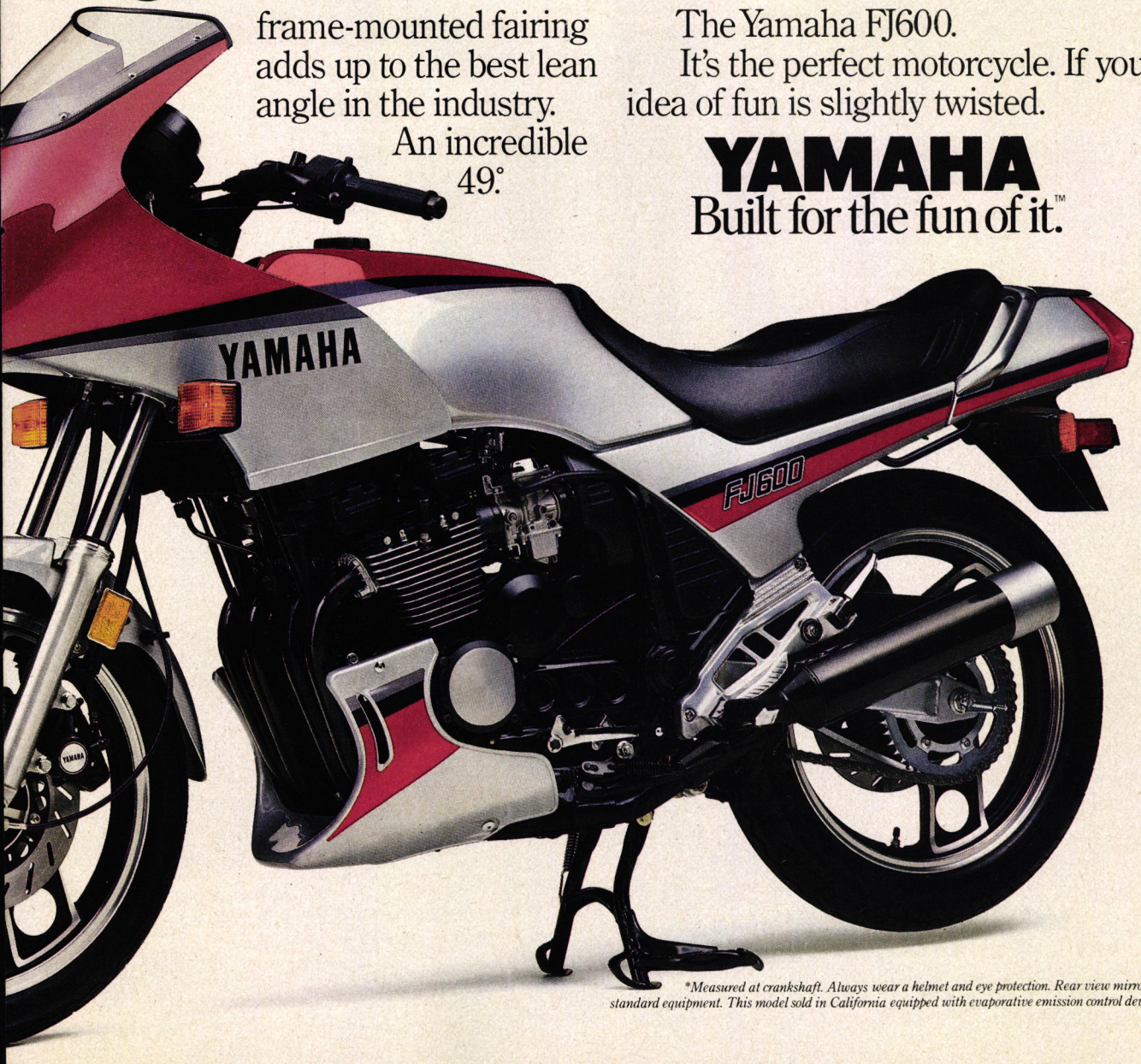


ay to unwind.

frame-mounted fairing adds up to the best lean angle in the industry. An incredible 49°.

The Yamaha FJ600. It's the perfect motorcycle. If your idea of fun is slightly twisted.

YAMAHA
Built for the fun of it.™



**Measured at crankshaft. Always wear a helmet and eye protection. Rear view mirror(s) standard equipment. This model sold in California equipped with evaporative emission control device.*

530 SIGMA
Tsubaki Sealed O-Ring Chain
You Asked For It
TSUBAKI Made It...The Best!
ANOTHER STATE OF THE ART CHAIN
FROM TSUBAKI... MADE WITH PRIDE.
Ask Your Dealer For Tsubaki Drive and
Cam Chain... The Pro's Choice
TSUBAKI
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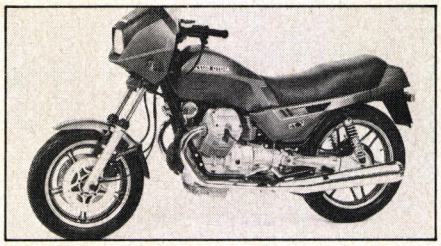
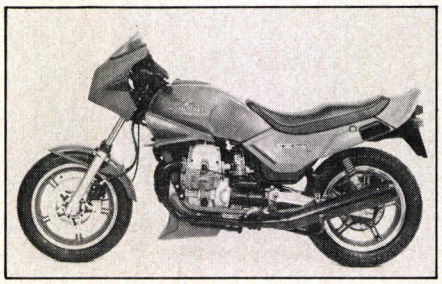
UST, INC. Whittier, CA U.S.A.



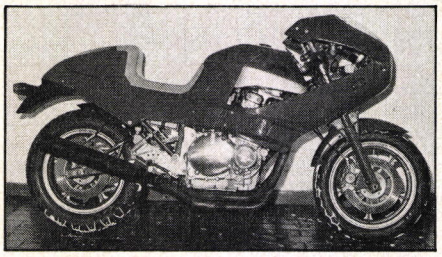
Guzzi's new V75 at least looks traditional

But has four-valve heads.



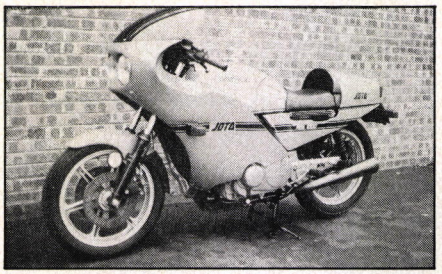
V35 Imola mimics the Monza's styling

And uses four-valve heads, as well.



Egli/Kraft is a true World Bike

It's Japanese, Swiss and German.



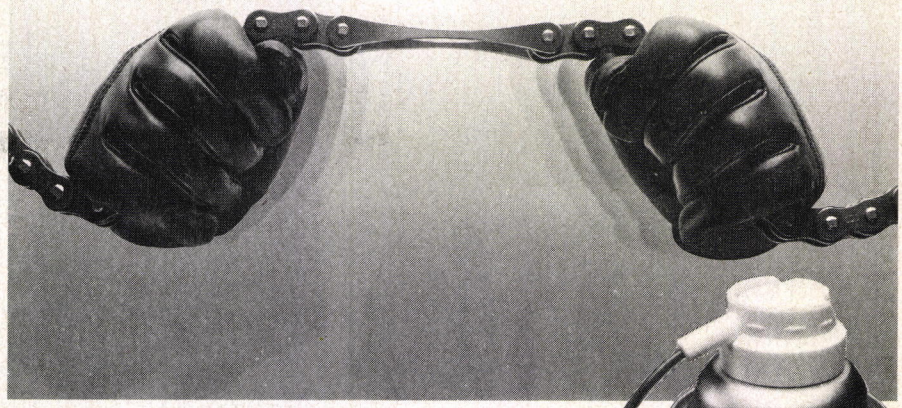
Slater Bros. has put it all together

To build high-performance Jotas.

has just made its debut into this new field with the A59 radial rear tire for two-wheelers. For now, anyway, the new Michelins will be mounted exclusively on Bimotas.

• Thirty years ago the name Horex meant something in the world of motorcycle roadracing. More recently, though, the company has been better known for its lightweight two-strokes and mopeds, basic-transportation two-wheelers that have been quite successful in Europe. But Horex has just introduced two new models, both four-strokes. The two new Horex bikes are four-valve, 350cc machines, one an enduro model and the other a dual-purpose derivative. Both bikes feature six-speed transmissions, Grimeca brakes and Marzocchi forks. The SB 35, the dual-purpose model, is fitted with an electric starter.

Continued



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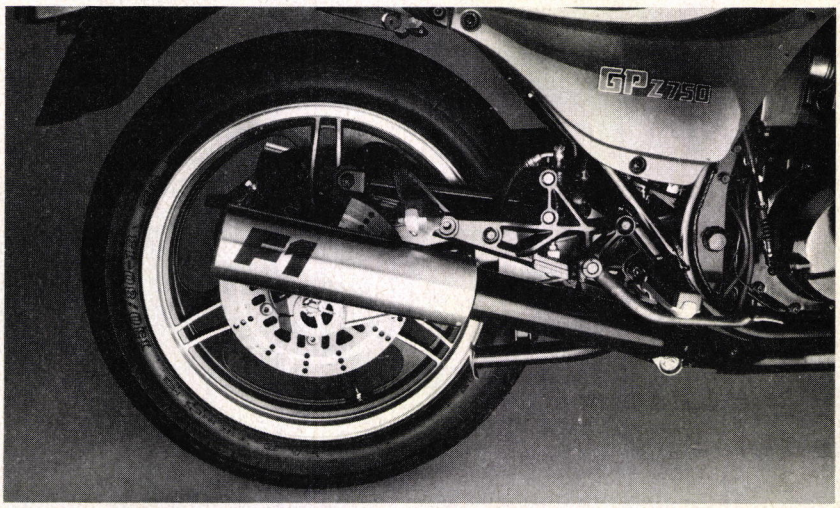

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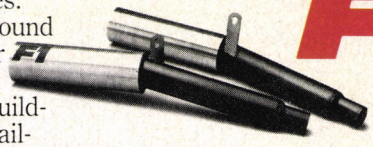

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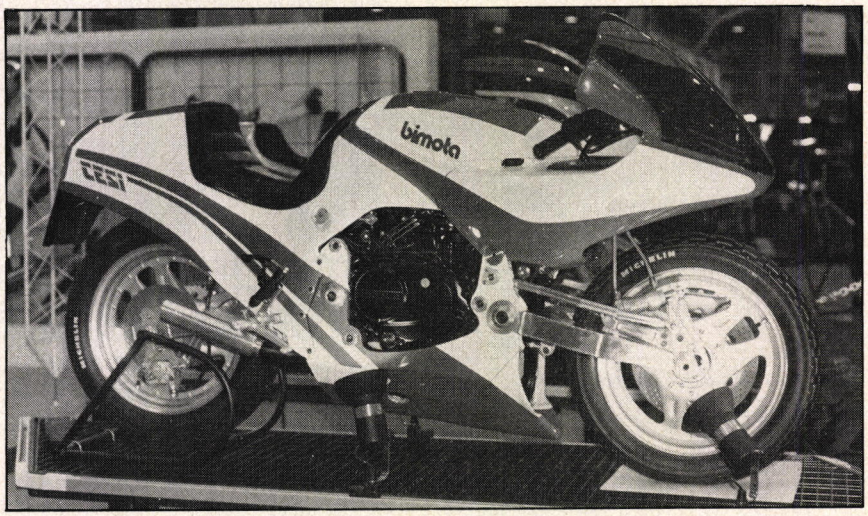
MILAN '84:

Bimota Tesi and Cagiva/Ducati

Two ways of saying "showstopper" in Italian.

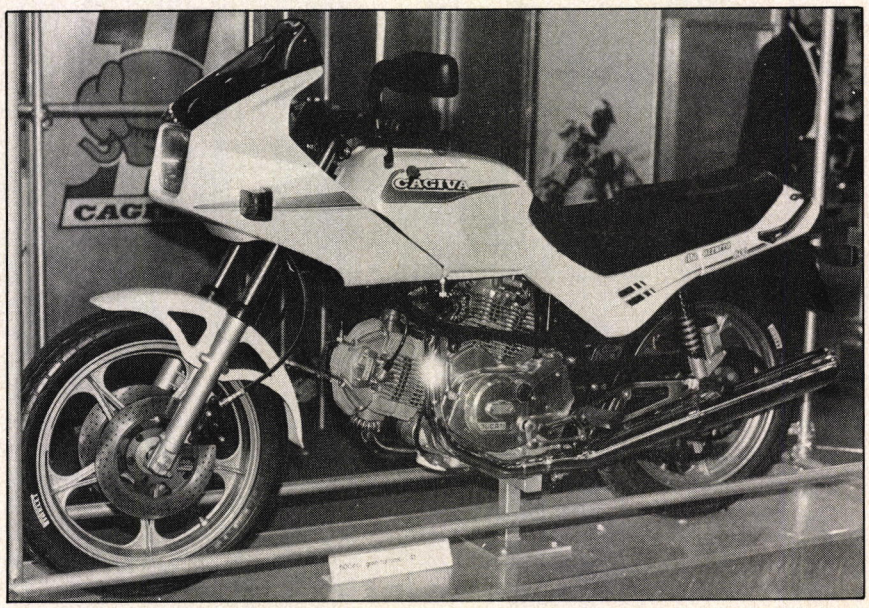


Bimota's prototype Tesi gives new meaning to the word "innovative"

And proves this Italian specialty manufacturer marches to its own beat.

• The Milan Motorcycle Expo proved, if nothing else, that Italians are still in the business of building interesting, original machinery. Certainly some of the bikes first shown there were expected, even anticipated (among them, the Ducati-powered Cagivas). But one new two-wheeler showcased at Milan, Bimota's Tesi, was a bona fide standout.

This prototype Bimota is powered by a Honda VF400F vee-four mounted in a monocoque tub. The tub iself is a carbon-fiber/Kevlar-honeycomb design. And while the rear suspension that mounts to it is a fairly standard single-shock system, the bike's front suspension is a departure from any current production design. There is no front fork, at least not in the traditional sense. Instead, the front wheel mounts in a kind of four-strut aluminum swingarm that uses center-hub steering. Front-wheel travel is controlled by a single shock, mounted beneath the engine. Bimota claims its progressive-linkage sys-



Cagiva's new Ala Azzura 600 starts out right where Ducati left off

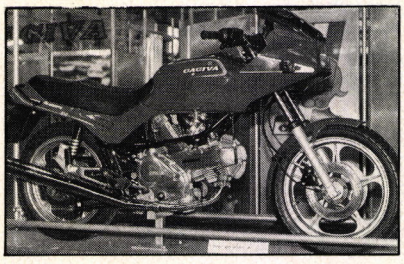
And continues the tradition of tandem vee-twin Italian sportbikes.

tem connecting that shock to the front hub provides a state-of-the-art anti-dive, and calls the new suspension the Dive Control System. Also, the bike's suspension rates and chassis geometry reportedly were designed to use radial tires. The wheels mounting those tires are something special, as well. They're composites of cast- and forged-aluminum, glued together. The wheels are said to be extremely strong, while weighing less than even cast-magnesium pieces.

This 400cc prototype Tesi is expected to be followed by larger-displacement Honda vee-four-powered versions, possibly for European endurance racing. Production bikes, however, aren't scheduled until 1985. By that time, only Bimota knows what it will have in the prototype stages, but topping the innovation shown in the Tesi won't be easy.

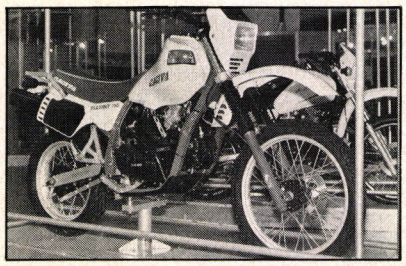
On a somewhat less exotic level, the Cagiva/Ducati bikes shown at Milan served notice that, under this new collaboration, the no-frills Italian sportbike is, indeed, alive and well. The new Ala Azzurra street models, presented in both 600cc and 350cc sizes, were proof of that. And Cagiva's interpretation of the classic Italian 90-degree tandem-vee-twin sportbike appears to pick up right where Ducati left off. The new Elefant 750, however, is somewhat of a detour. It's Cagiva's top-of-the-line dual-purpose machine, powered by a Ducati vee-twin.

While Cagiva's use of Ducati powerplants isn't as revolutionary as Bimota's monocoque-construction Tesi, it's still significant. And so was the show itself, if only as a demonstration that moto-innovation isn't a Japanese exclusive. *—Joe Kress*



Ala Azzura 350 is a downsized GT

With plenty of upscale features.



Cagiva/Ducatis aren't all pure-street

Elefant 750 is a vee-twin for the dirt.

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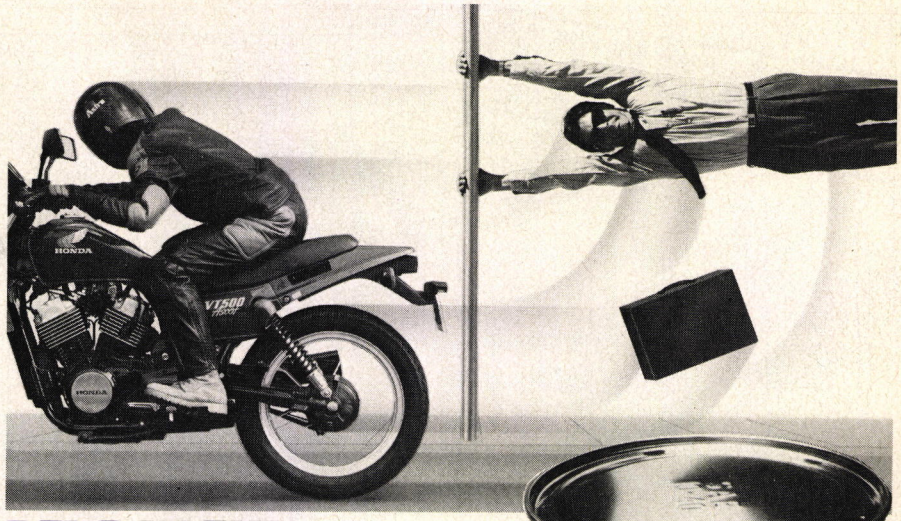

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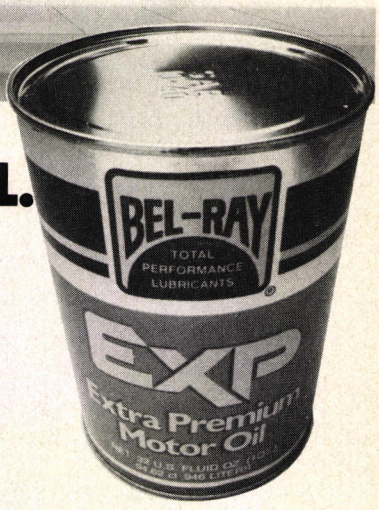

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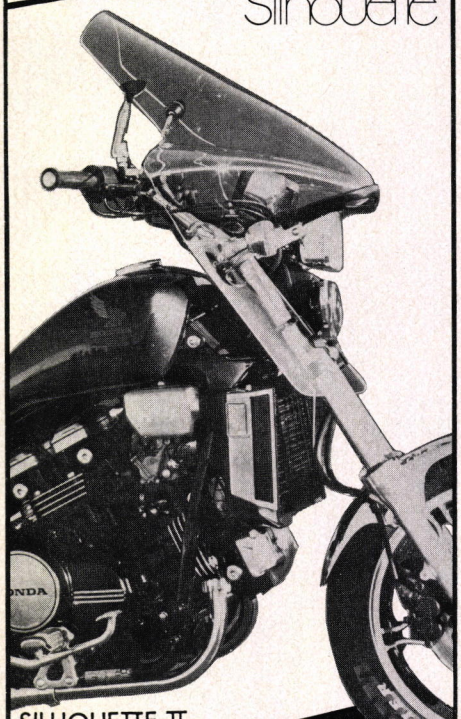
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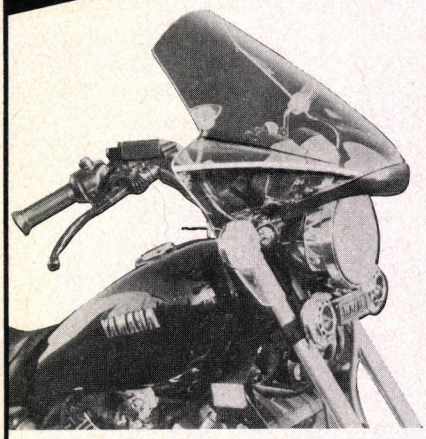
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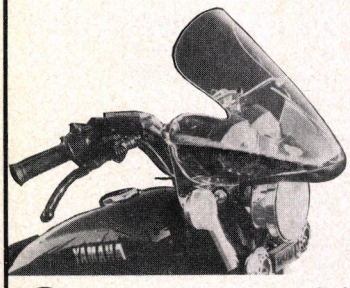
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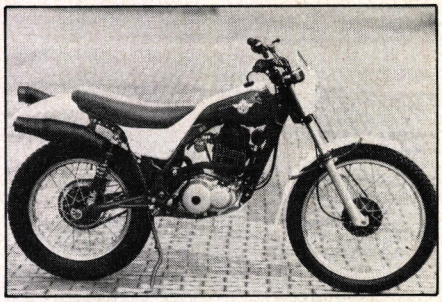
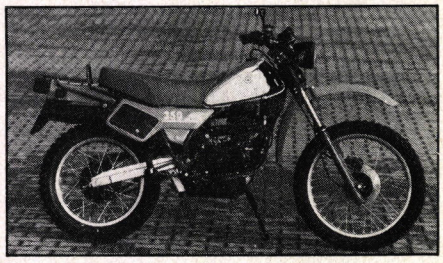


Horex is building four-strokes again

After a 30-year layoff.



Horex's four-valver will see the street

It powers a dual-purpose bike, too.

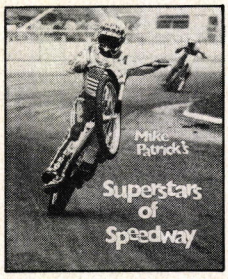
• And finally, coming soon could be touch-ups and custom paint jobs that match the high quality of factory paintwork. Since 1975, most Japanese bikes have come from the factory with a hard-to-match, three-stage finish. But now, a Minnesota company, Ex-Aero Paint, has developed the color-mixing formulas and application processes needed to color-match more than 250 of the popular motorcycle colors. Ex-Aero offered these paints and processes on a mail-order basis, but now Ditzler Paint Company, a major auto paint firm, has gotten into the act. Soon, motorcyclists will be able to go to any auto-supply store that handles Ditzler products and purchase custom-mixed paints formulated to match the colors of Japanese motorcycles.

HARD CASH

• After a period of fierce corporate infighting that threatened the company's very existence, the situation at Maico apparently has stabilized. The West German motorcycles will be available in the United States through a new distributor and with a new name. Hercules Distributing of Chatsworth, California, will handle the German marque. Starting with the 1984 models, Hercules will supply the bikes, now called M Stars, and all spare parts for them. Hercules currently is establishing its dealer network. Four M Star models will be offered: a 250cc liquid-cooled motocrosser, a 250cc air-cooled cross-country bike, a 500cc air-cooled motocrosser, and a 500cc air-cooled cross-country machine. Maico U.S.A., in Suffolk, Virginia, however, will be the supplier of replacement parts for models manufactured prior to 1983. That company also will market its Draftline motorcycling apparel.

• BMW appears to be on the rise in this country, and has reported 4647 bikes sold in the

Book Review



Superstars of Speedway
by Mike Patrick
96 pages, $9.95
Oxford Publishing Company
Link House, West Street
Poole, Dorset, England

• Speedway racing is the second-largest spectator sport in England, and the best-known photographer of that sport in England probably is Mike Patrick. For more than 10 years he's been recording speedway with his Nikons. "Superstars of Speedway" is Patrick's third book on the subject, and his most heavily illustrated yet. Translation: "Superstars" is a photo album and little more.

While there's no question that the 230 photos he picked—reproduced both in black and white and color, and printed on slick, heavy stock—are excellent, there is some question about their value. Only hardcore speedway fans will be able to appreciate this book, since "Superstars" is little more than photo essay for the faithful. Captions aside, the only text in this collection is the brief introduction, in which Patrick states: ". . .this time, I have decided to cut out all those boring words that are usually found in books, to make way for lots and lots of pictures."

And that's a shame. Because while some of the photos are exciting without the "boring" words, a speedway outsider has no idea who the stars in "Superstars" are, or even why they've been included in this book. About the only face in Patrick's book familiar to most Americans whould be Bruce Penhall's; and Penhall would be known as much for his TV work as for his motorcycle racing.

Speedway is, arguably, one of the most intense forms of motorcycle competition. It's fast-paced action, with one heat coming right after another. All the wheel-to-wheel, dirt-spraying bravado takes place right in front of everyone in the stadium. "Superstars of Speedway" captures some of that excitement.

But don't look for any explanations—this book assumes you already know the players. And don't hope to learn anything more about Speedway than you already know, such as the differences between a Jawa, a Weslake or a Goden. "Superstars of Speedway" is pretty to look at but, unfortunately, little more. *—Joe Kress*

U.S. during 1983. According to company spokesmen, that is a record sales high for BMW. The company projects a 16 percent increase over that figure for '84, sparked by the moved-up U.S. introduction date for the K100 inline-fours. Those bikes now are scheduled to arrive in this country by July. BMW has 259 dealers nationwide, and expects to sell 5400 units, not all K100s of course, during 1984. Prices have increased an average 4.4 percent for the 1984 boxer-twins, which now range from $3700 for the R65 to $7400 for the current top-of-the-line R100RT. Prices for the K100s have not been announced.

• Honda has reported an income of $97 million for the third quarter of 1983, a 20 percent increase over the same period for 1982. To no one's surprise, though, that jump in corporate income is hardly due to the sale of motorcycles. According to Honda's figures, motorcycle sales fell 13 percent below the previous year's third-quarter totals, and accounted for only 15 percent of the company's net sales. Honda sold 583,000 bikes worldwide during the third quarter of '83, compared to 668,000 units during same period in 1982.

• Money recently spent by the Dunlop Tire and Rubber Company will pay extra dividends to West Coast roadracers. But the benefit this time isn't a better race tire; it's a safer racetrack. Dunlop conducts much of its tire testing at Willow Springs Raceway in Rosamond, California, and in order to make the track safer, Dunlop financed the relocation of more than 1000 feet of earthen embankment surrounding Turn Two to allow an additional 120 feet of runoff area.

FEDERAL CASES

• One man can make a difference, even in a metropolis like New York City. When New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced plans to boost motorcycle tolls on all city bridges by 50 percent, Bob Freidrich, of Levittown, New York, balked. Freidrich, backed by the AMA's Government Relations Department, petitioned the Authority to reconsider its position. The petition pointed out the smaller size of motorcycles and the minimal damage they cause roadways as compared to the damage done by cars and trucks. Freidrich and the AMA made a strong enough case before the MTA, because the motorcycle tolls were not changed. The average toll for cars, however, was raised by 20 percent.

• If you're a motorcyclist over the age of 18 but not yet a registered voter, the AMA's latest program is aimed your way. The association has launched its Rider Vote '84 drive, in the hope of making the voice of motorcycling heard at the polls. The only way motorcycling can hope to be fairly treated by the nation's lawmakers, reasons the AMA, is if motorcyclists themselves become politically aware and active. Because presidential elections will be held this year, the AMA feels the opportunity has never been better for riders to show their concern by voting for federal, state and

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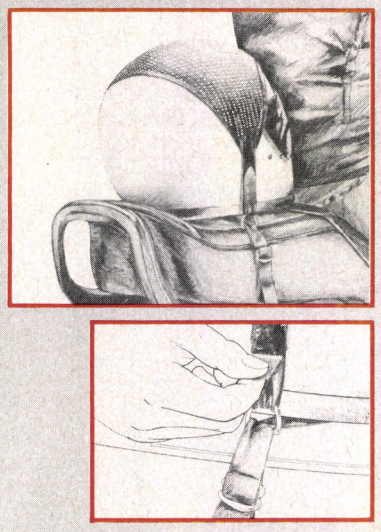

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• Missouri's Division of Highway Safety recently awarded a grant that will continue funding of the Missouri Motorcycle Rider Education Program. The Missouri rider-ed project was a pilot operation last year, set up to prepare riders for the stricter riding tests that had become part of the state's motorcycling licensing procedure. Missouri's rider education program is now administered by the Missouri Safety Center. The recent grant will expand the center to five locations, and as a result the program's administrators hope to train more than 1000 riders during 1984.

RUMORS

• While Suzuki's '84 U.S. lineup is one of the smallest in memory, we've heard talk that some of the "midyear introductions" the company hinted at could be just around the corner. Most of the discussions about these late arrivals center on their engines: a pair of liquid-cooled vee-fours. Our sources report that the two new Suzuki engines could show up soon, one in a 700cc size to slip in under the U.S. tariff regulations, and another in a 1200cc configuration. Further speculation has the powerplants using 90-degree vee-spreads, four valves per cylinder and shaft drive. That last bit might give a clue as to the intended use. Our sources tell us to look for some vee-four cruisers, perhaps in both displacements—and maybe a full-blown, turnkey tourer powered by the 1200.

• This bit comes straight from our men in the Midwest. According to these snoops, the air-adjustable rear suspension used on some of the '84 Harleys was just a beginning. Next up on the list of Harley-Davidson refinements, we're told, is a self-adjusting, self-leveling suspension system. This twin-shock suspension, so goes the scoop, is not a Harley-only project. We're told that, consistent with the latest thinking in Milwaukee, the American manufacturer has gone out of the country for some help on this one, just as it did with a few of the internal components now used in Harley's V² Evolution engine.

• On the motocross scene, Kawasaki might soon unveil one of its '85 production models. Traditionally, the Ponca City, Oklahoma Nationals are the first showing for a company's newest MXers. We've heard that Kawasaki could break out its latest Open-class warrior there: the KX500LC, the liquid-cooled, big-bore racer the company has been refining for more than a year. If that bike shows up at Ponca City this summer, as insiders say it will, don't be surprised to see it in dealerships shortly thereafter.

• But don't hold your breath waiting for a 750cc Ninja. A three-quarter-liter model of Kawasaki's new liquid-cooled, 16-valve inline-four will debut soon in Japan, but Kawasaki watchers say there are no plans to bring the 750 into the U.S.—not even for Superbike racing. But then, we've all heard that kind of talk before.

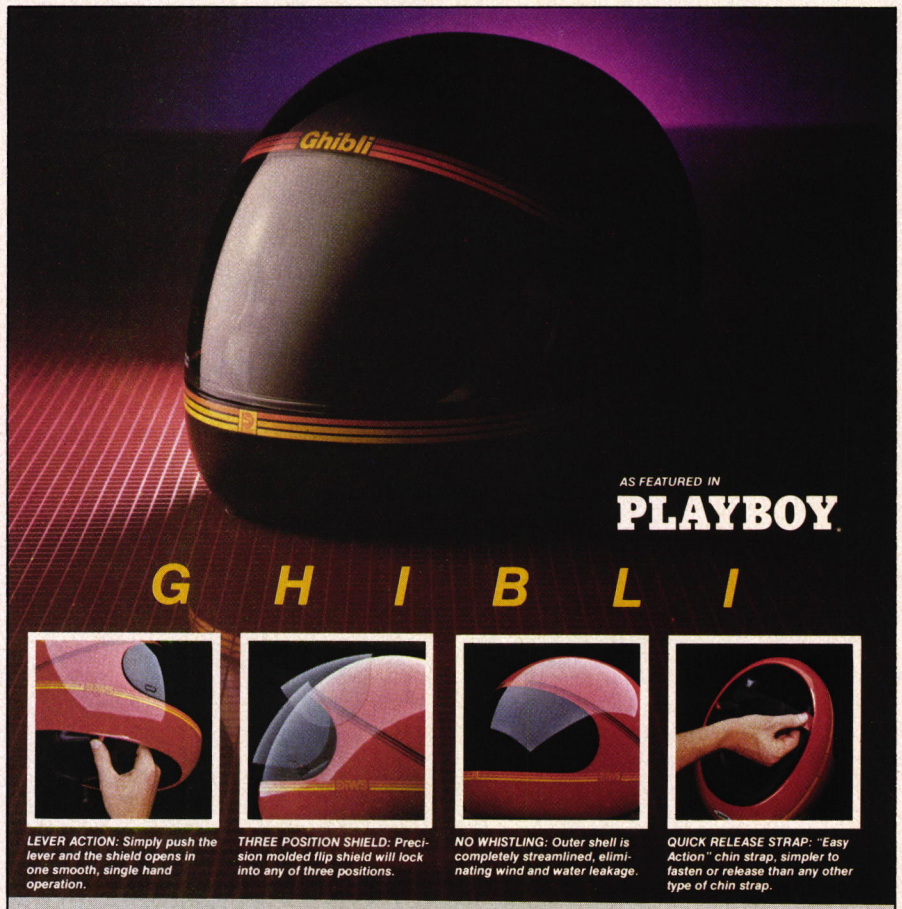
AFTER THE FACT

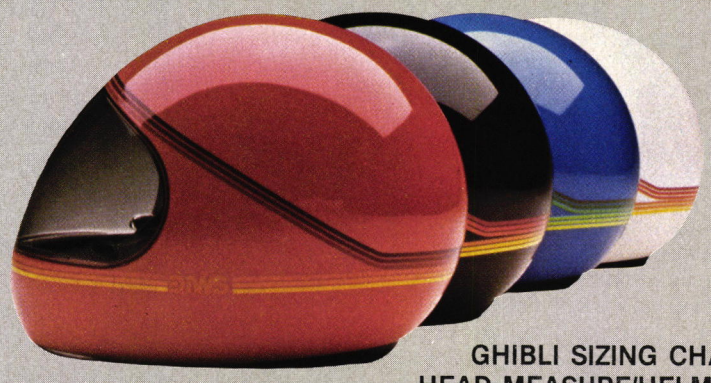
• In the "Moto-Fi" story in our March issue, we reported that the Panasonic cassette deck that is standard equipment on Honda's Aspencade is equipped with a Dolby noise-reduction system. That is not correct; the unit does not have Dolby. Also the $949.80 price for the sound system does not include a CB transceiver set. The CB costs an additional $324.95.

• We have been told that the $3700 price quoted for the Benelli 900 Sei in the March issue in the Coming Soon section is the price for leftover 1983 models. At present, plans to import the 1984 Sei to America have not been finalized.

APART FROM THE CROWD

• While Bimota's revolutionary Tesi (see Milan Show, page 56) represents the latest approach to a rethink of a motorcycle's front suspension, Norman Hossack is quite happy, thank you, to continue right along with his ver-





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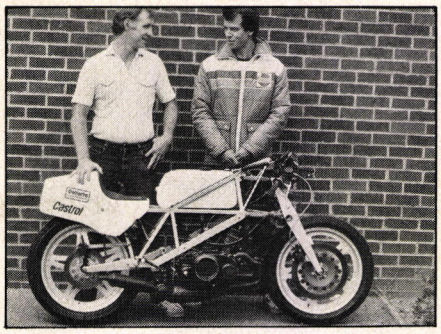
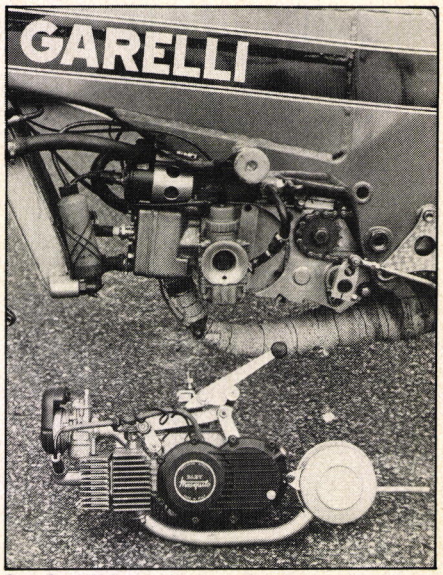
23 3/4" to 24 1/4"	= X-Large

sion of the One True Suspension. Hossack, an ex-McLaren Indy-car builder, has brought all-new meaning to the term "twin-shock" suspension. Hossack's bike uses two shocks, to be sure, but in this case one of them controls rear-wheel movement while the other controls the movement of the front wheel. A solid, box-section fork is linked to the bike's frame by a series of unequal-length Heim-jointed struts. One end of the shock is connected to the fork and the other is mounted to the bike's frame. Hossack has been working on this design for a few years now and predicts it's the wave of the future. Maybe so, but the designers at Bimota might disagree.



Bimota uses one approach, Hossack another

Redefining motorcycle suspension.



One Garelli for racing, one for the road

And for powering bicycles, at that.

• Break out the swatters, the Mosquitos are starting to swarm. Italy's Garelli, of smallbore two-stroke fame, has just reintroduced a form of motive power for two-wheelers that was popularized in the days immediately following World War II. The rehatched Garelli Mosquito is a tiny engine that clips onto a bicycle frame, and uses a direct roller-drive to the rear wheel. But technology hasn't stood still over the years; the original Mosquitos of the late-Forties were 38cc models, while this new version displaces a whopping 50cc.

• Works Performance has something completely different, though. That company's shock absorbers, long a staple of off-road motorcycling, will be showing up on all four corners of off-road racing trucks soon. Now, that spin-off isn't too hard to follow—off-road racing is, after all, off-road racing. But the latest project that Works has in the works, so to speak, is a shock absorber for off-land racing. It seems that sailboards, those combinations of surfboards and sailboats, have been known to break in half when bounding off heavy seas. The board makers went to Works Performance for a solution. The answer: a Works Performance prototype sailboard shock, mast-mounted and using water as the hydraulic fluid. Call it a case of MX technology that's not afraid to get wet.

• The British motorcycle industry is still kicking, at least on some fronts. John Wright-Bailey, a former sidecar racer, plans to build an all-new, flat-four-powered machine incorporating such innovations as a carbon-fiber monocoque chassis, hub-center steering and air suspension front and rear. The engine for the project is just as ambitious: Wright-Bailey says the new powerplant would be available in 350cc, 500cc and 700cc displacements, and that as much as 80 percent of it would be formed from plastics. The project is not only ambitious, it is typically British: Development funds for this new high-tech moto-venture have been provided by the British government. God save the queen. ●

Italian Currency Devalued Against U.S. Dollar

WORLD FAMOUS GHIBLI HELMET TO BE SOLD FOR $69 A PIECE DURING MAMMOTH PUBLICITY DRIVE

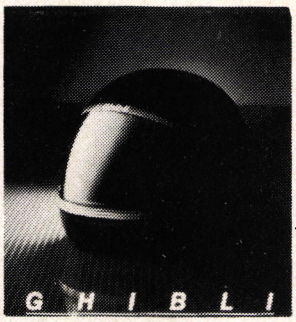
THIS IS NOT *A MISPRINT*

The Italian manufacturer of the famous Ghibli Motorcycle Helmet was so pleased with the first publicity campaign (held during the 4th quarter of 1983), that he has agreed to offer a second shipment of 10,000 Ghibli Helmets at the same price reduction, in an unprecedented move to gain market share and help convert Italian manufactured goods to valuable U.S. dollars.

All who wish to apply for a new GHIBLI HELMET should write to the company address below before Midnight, July 31, 1984.

Special Note: The previous promotion of this helmet was a complete sell out - so act now for best color selection.

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA Ten thousand new GHIBLI Motorcycle helmets, with lever activated, three (3) position flip shield and patented *"Easy Action"* quick release chin strap, will be sold as part of a giant publicity campaign for only *$69 apiece to the first ten thousand who write or call the company before midnight, July 31st, 1984.



The new GHIBLI Helmets will not be sold at this price by this company in any store. To obtain one at this price, apply in writing or by telephone to the company no later than midnight, July 31, 1984.

Each helmet carries a *full one-year warranty*. There is a limit of (2) helmets per address at these prices, but requests mailed or called in early enough (before July 15th, 1984) are permitted to order up to 6 helmets.

These are the same famous Ghibli Helmets that retail for over $110 each and were featured in the pages of ***Playboy magazine, Cycle World, Cycle Guide, Rider*** and other leading magazines and referred to as ***"the first totally new helmet to come along in a decade"***.

Weighing less than many open faced helmets, the Ghibli still exceeds all National and International government safety standards, including D.O.T. and is fully approved for use in all AMA sanctioned motorcycle competition events. At the same time, Ghibli includes features never before available on motorcycle helmets. Features such as flush mounted *"3-position"* face shield that eliminates whistling and wind noise. A quick-release chin strap mechanism, which enables helmet removal, even with bulky gloves on.

To apply for a new Ghibli Helmet, mail this original printed notice together with your name and address and *$69 for one (1) or *$65 each for 2 or more helmets, plus only $4. for shipping and handling no matter how many helmets you request. Mail to:

GHIBLI HELMET PROMOTION
3857 Birch St., Dept. 335 C
Newport Beach, CA 92660

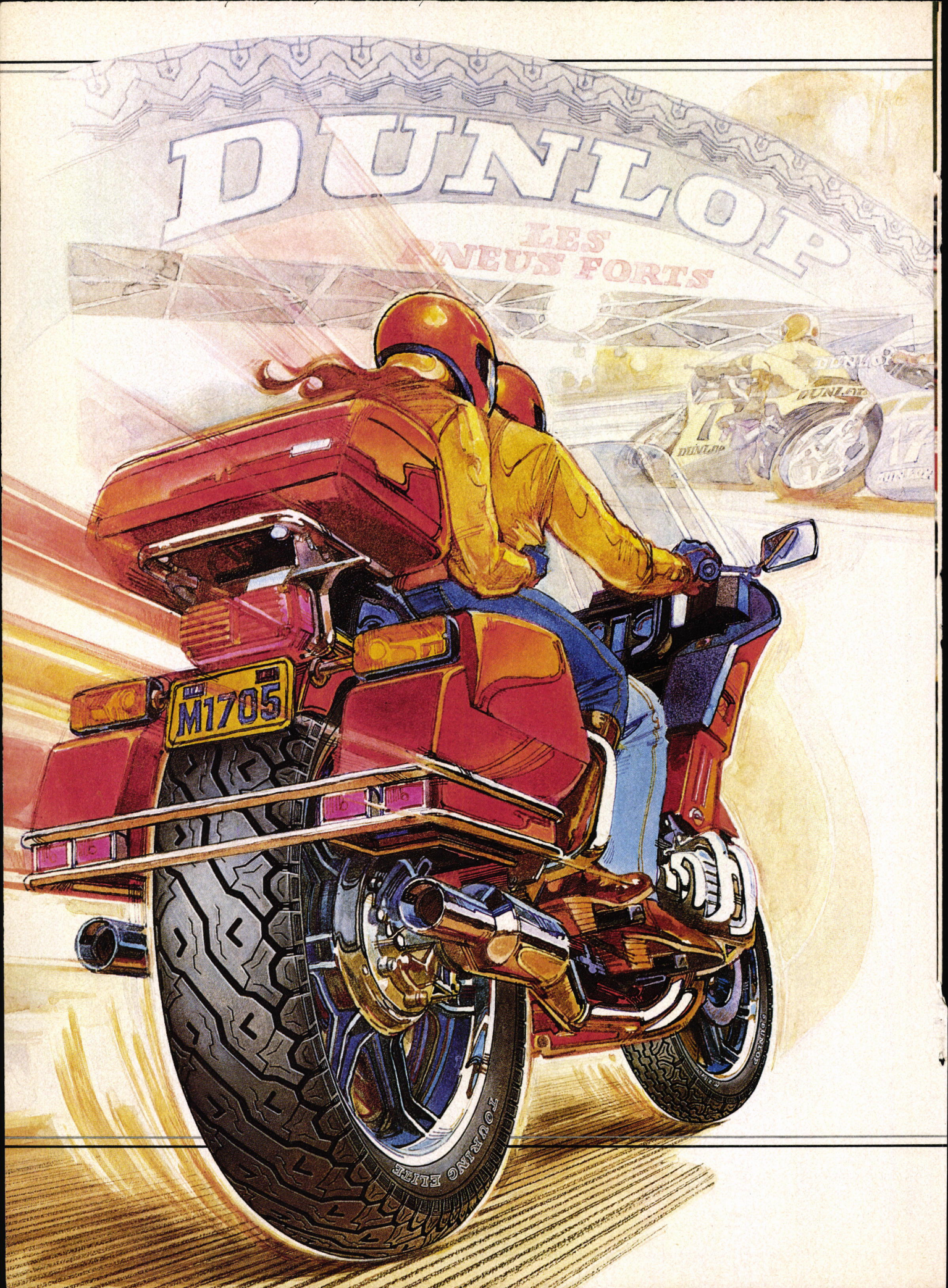
Or call direct for phone order information:

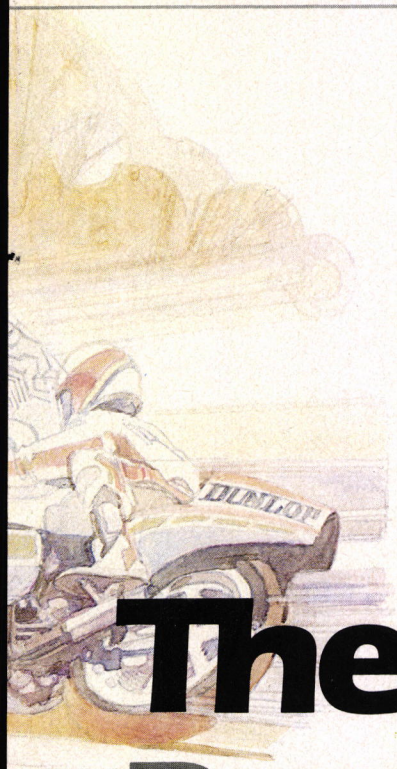
NATION
1-714-547-5702

OUTSIDE CALIFORNIA
1-800-621-9183

NOTE: Payment may be made by ***Visa, Mastercard, American Express*** or Money Order. Do not send cash.

*These are promotional prices **only** and therefore are good only thru the dates and times listed above. For up to date prices after July 31, 1984 write or call company direct.


DUNLOP
LES
PNEUS FORTS
M1705
TOURING ELITE
DUNLOP



Bred from endurance racing.

The long mileage, bias-belted Touring Elite was developed from the same technology as our belted endurance racing slicks... tires that have consistently won the World Championship of Endurance Racing. Sweeping to victory at the most famous races... LeMans, Spa, and Monza.

For nearly 80 years Dunlop has taken their motorcycle tire technology to the great racetracks of the world... to prove their leadership where it counts.

And this unending pursuit of ultimate tire performance has created a legend... an incredible record of triumph that dates back to 1907!

Racetrack performance translates into open road conquest... even under the changing conditions of long distance touring.

So if you satisfy your wanderlust aboard a two-wheeled full-dress, cross-country cruiser, you want the touring tire with the endurance racing heritage...
Dunlop Touring Elite.

The Legend Lives.
Dunlop Touring Elite®

Engineered for touring.

The Dunlop Touring Elite is constructed specifically to handle touring loads* and changing conditions...delivering high mileage touring performance.

Using the bias-belted carcass of our endurance racing slicks as a starting point, Dunlop engineered the Touring Elite to deliver the optimum combination of mileage and traction.

The firm bias-belted carcass provides a solid and secure footprint by reducing tread squirm at the contact patch. The high denier plies fight internal heat buildup - a tire's worst enemy at constant highway speeds - and prolong tire life.

*Touring Elite rear tires, cold inflation pressure should be a minimum of 36 PSI for light loads and 40 PSI for dual riding and other heavier loads. Never exceed maximum loads and pressures indicated on the sidewall of the tire.

† U.S. Patents:
No. 4,364,426 and
Des. 268,490

The deep, abrasion-resistant tread is molded into the patented† Elite pattern with transverse grooves. They help prevent rainstorms and rain grooves from turning your touring dream into a nightmare.

And flexible sidewalls designed to cushion the ride and load are reinforced by a high ply turnup and bead chafer.

When the open road throws you a curve, or Mother Nature rains on your parade... you can respond with the full-load, two-up confidence that only comes from riding on the legend... Dunlop.

Live the legend, just see your authorized Dunlop dealer.

DUNLOP

The logical choice

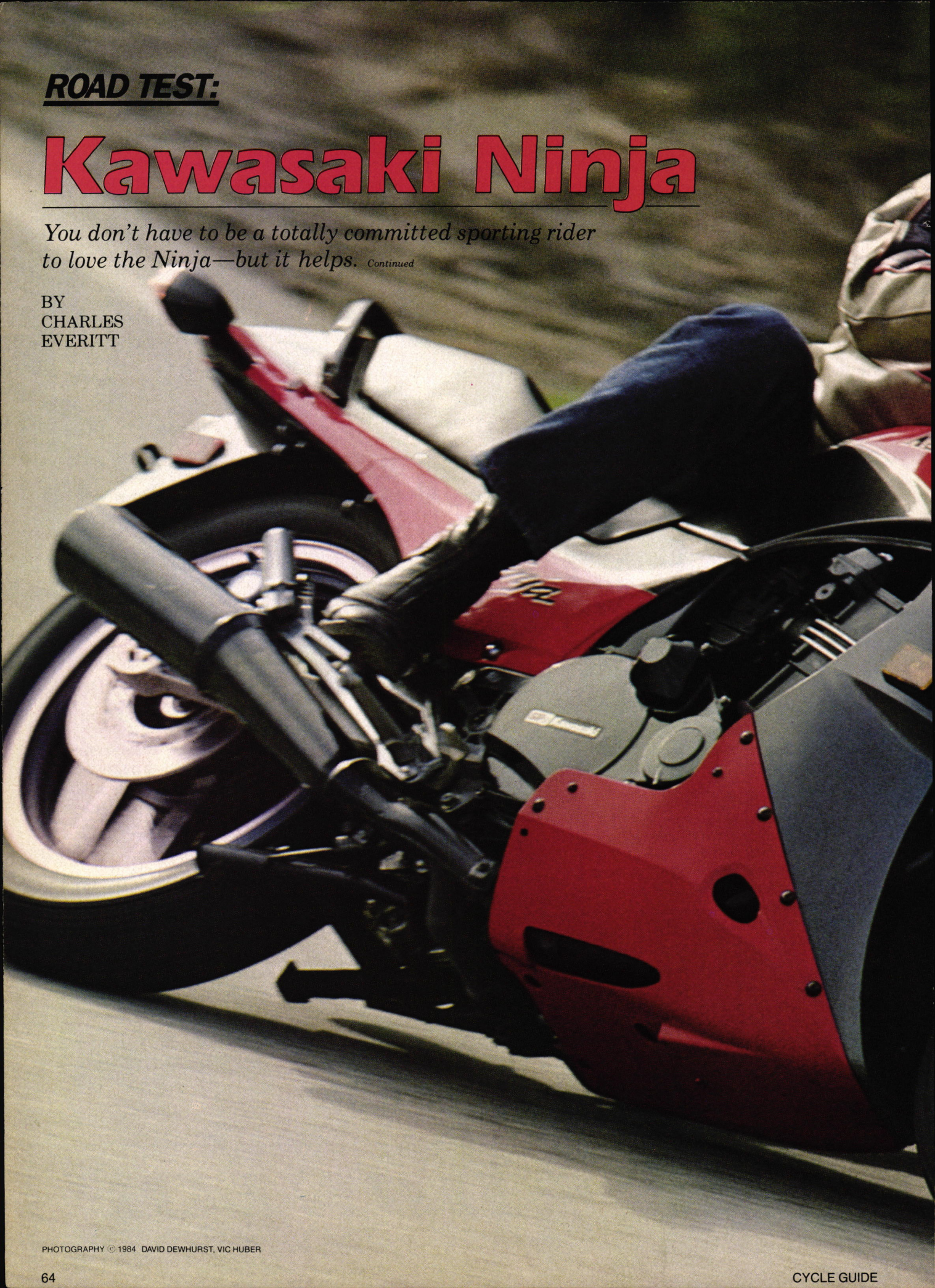
Dunlop Tire & Rubber Corp. Buffalo, NY 14240-1109.

ROAD TEST:

Kawasaki Ninja

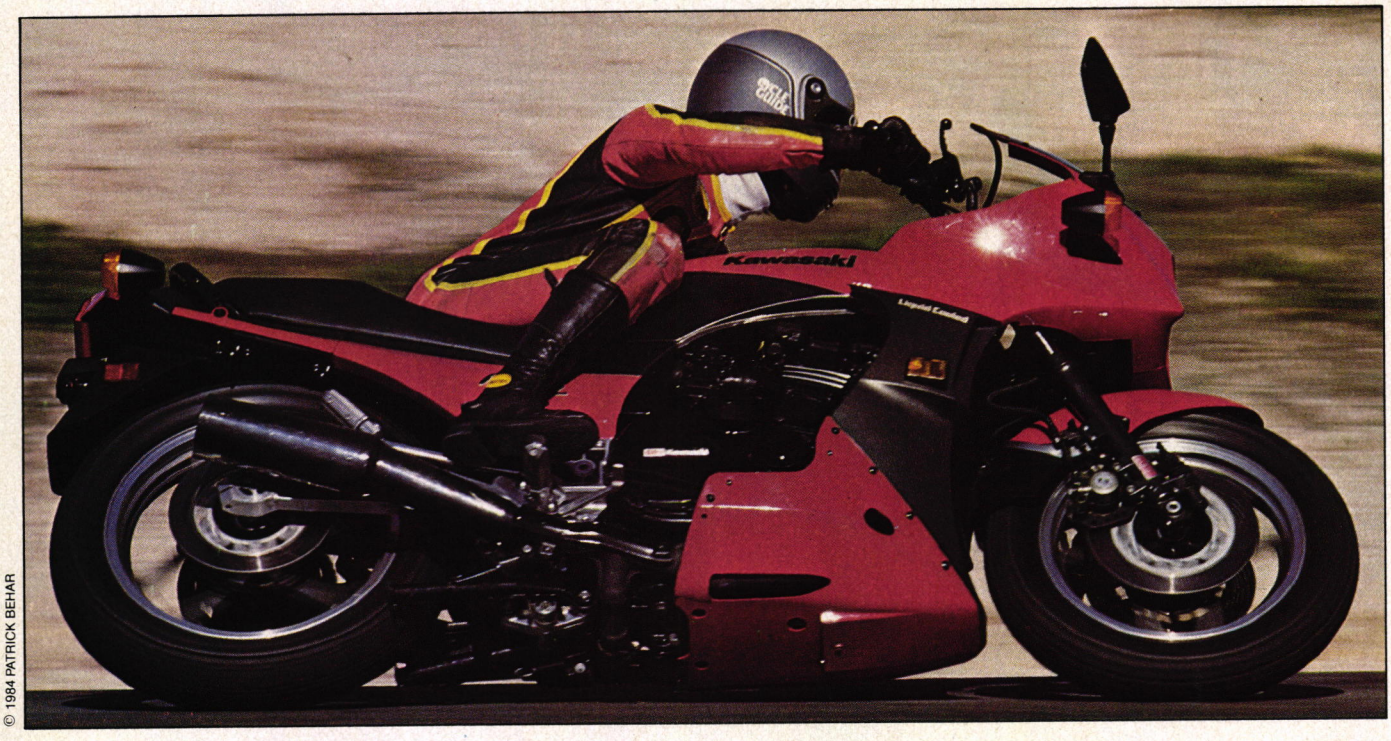
You don't have to be a totally committed sporting rider to love the Ninja—but it helps. Continued

BY
CHARLES
EVERITT



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 DAVID DEWHURST, VIC HUBER

Liquid Cooled
AVDS



© 1984 PATRICK BEHAR

Hey, you there. Yes, you, the hard-core, footpeg-dragging, sportriding crazy, the one with the beveled boots and twitching throttle-hand. You say you want the closest thing going to a racebike for the street? Well, you're in luck, because Kawasaki's Ninja was built just for you. It's a fiery, lusty motorcycle with the taut feel of a racer, bags of high-revving horsepower and a personality that suggests it spent as much development time on the racetrack as it did on the street. The Ninja is nothing short of defiance on wheels: A full fairing and Firecracker Red paint defy the police to ignore it, while its scorching performance not only defies other motorcycles to keep up, but also defies riders to discover the limits of the bike's potential.

Moreover, the Ninja defies what might be considered Kawasaki sportbike tradition, at least as defined by the company's own GPz series of motorcycles. For instance, the Ninja's motor is liquid-cooled rather than air-cooled, and breathes through four valves per cylinder instead of through Kawasaki's time-honored two-valve design. Furthermore, the engine transfers its power through a six-speed gearbox, out of the ordinary for any big-bore sportbike. The new powerplant also functions as a stressed member of the Ninja's frame, which itself departs from normal GPz practice of double-downtube frames. The Ninja's frame actually consists of four separate pieces: a high-tensile-steel backbone section, a pair of cast-aluminum plates that help support the outboard ends of the swingarm pivot, and a tailsection constructed of box-section aluminum tubing, the first use of such material for a production streetbike's frame. Up front there's an innovative, variable-compression-damping fork, and a 16-inch front wheel in place of the 18-inchers currently used on Kawasaki's other sportbikes.

Nonetheless, Kawasaki didn't dispense with tradition completely in building the Ninja (called the GPz900R outside of the American market). Its 908cc displacement is reminiscent of Kawasaki's original 903cc Z-1 musclebike engine, a similarity the company is banking on. The Z-1's legend looms large in motorcycling's history, and Kawasaki hopes the Ninja/Z-1 identification will pay off in the showrooms. That link with the past does force the Ninja to spot other liter-size bikes as much as 227cc in displacement, but the engine's breath-taking performance will blow some other hyperbikes clean out of the water. And if the Ninja's 11.181-second/123.62-mph quarter-mile time isn't proof enough, check its 146-mph top speed.

What's even better is that such shattering performance doesn't point to an engine that hoards all its power up near its 10,500-rpm redline. Admittedly, below 5000 rpm the Ninja feels more like a tractable, strong-running 750 than a horsepower-intensive hyperbike. But the 900's quick-revving nature and six-speed gearbox mean you don't have to sit there and take it when another 1000 or 1100 tries to muscle past in a stoplight-to-stoplight contest. Quite the contrary; just wind up the revs and stir the shift lever. The engine really starts to open its eyes at about 6000 rpm, and then opens yours at around 7500 rpm, as the tach needle sweeps toward redline and the bike takes off in a headlong rush.

Hard charging on canyon roads requires the same sort of rev/shift choreography; you need to keep the engine wailing near redline for a good, hard drive out of corners. Consequently, the Ninja demands more effort and concentration from its rider than other, torquier, liter-sized streetbikes do during fast trips through the twisties. Fortunately, whacking the throttle open in mid-turn doesn't upset the bike, because of its smooth transition from the midrange to the fat part of the powerband.

Kawasaki achieved more than just performance in building the Ninja's motor, though. The engine is remarkably narrow—more than five inches narrower than an '84 GPz1100's—in part because of the alternator's location behind the cylinder block (instead of on the crankshaft's end, as on existing GPz motors). Liquid-cooling also contributed to the engine's trimness, allowing the cylinders to be placed more closely together than if they had been air-cooled; and the Ninja's wet-liner design allowed the cylinders to be closer still. But the pivotal element of the Ninja's engine's narrowness is its cam drive, which is not in the usual location between the two middle cylinders, but is instead at the extreme left end of the engine. That allowed even spacing of all

four cylinders, as well as a five-main-bearing crankshaft that is considerably narrower than the six-main types used on all other Japanese inline-fours. And as a result of its even cylinder spacing, the Ninja's intake ports are straight, which benefits power output.

Those intake ports are fed by a quartet of Keihin CV carbs that use an innovative semi-flat slide design. Each slide is essentially flat, with a small cylinder resembling an undersized round slide in the middle. Kawasaki claims that because this design allows a cleaner venturi, not unlike that of most "smooth-bore" carbs, it provides better airflow, improved fuel atomization and quicker throttle response than do conventional, round-slide carbs. And riding the Ninja certainly doesn't refute those claims; throttle response is clean and immediate, with no glitches or hesitation anywhere in the rev range.

Downstream from the carbs, each cylinder's two intake and exhaust valves are opened by forked cam-followers with screw-and-locknut adjusters, a departure from Kawasaki's standard practice of using bucket-and-shim valve adjustment. And the advantages of the four-valve design are obvious. First, using more and smaller valves allows a narrower included valve angle (34.9 degrees for the Ninja, some 25 degrees less than the GPz1100's), creating a shallow combustion chamber for clean, efficient burning. In addition, a four-valve setup offers more valve area, and the smaller, lighter pieces raise the threshold of valve-float higher than in a corresponding two-valve system. So in almost every way, the Ninja's 16-valve head is improved, not merely different, from the standard GPz eight-valve design.

You'll find other differences in the engine's bottom-end, too. The Ninja has a one-piece, plain-bearing crankshaft and two-piece connecting rods, whereas the GPz1100 uses a built-up, roller-bearing crank and one-piece rods. Furthermore, the straight-cut primary gear on the Ninja's crank also drives a counterbalancer to help damp vibration caused by the secondary imbalance that's inherent in an inline-four. The counterbalancer also allowed Kawasaki to mount the engine solidly so it could be used as a stressed member, eliminating the need for front downtubes in the frame. As a result, the engine could be mounted low in the frame for a low center of gravity. Without the balancer, Kawasaki would have had to live with the vibration—or else rubber-mount the engine, which

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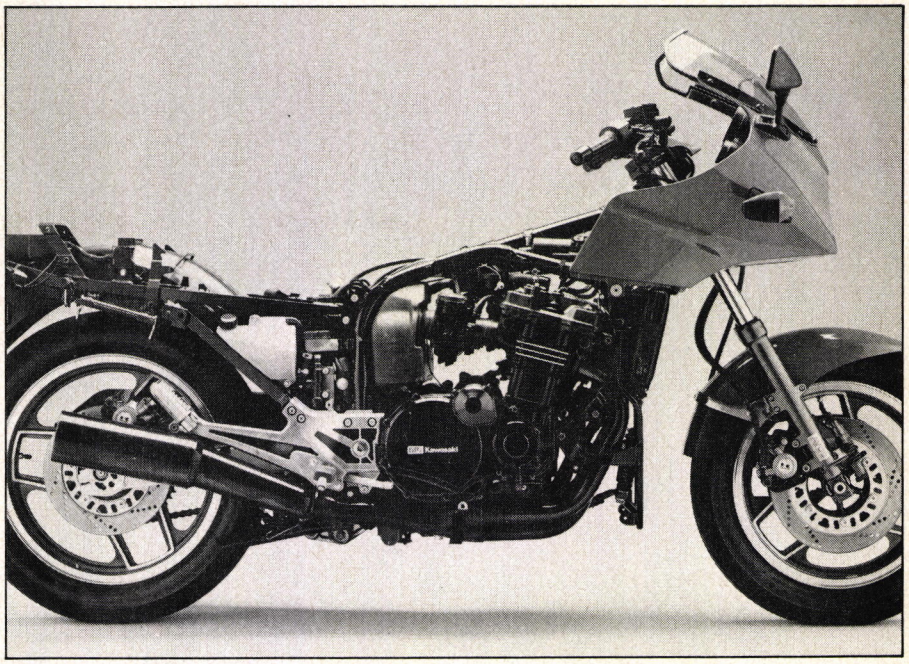
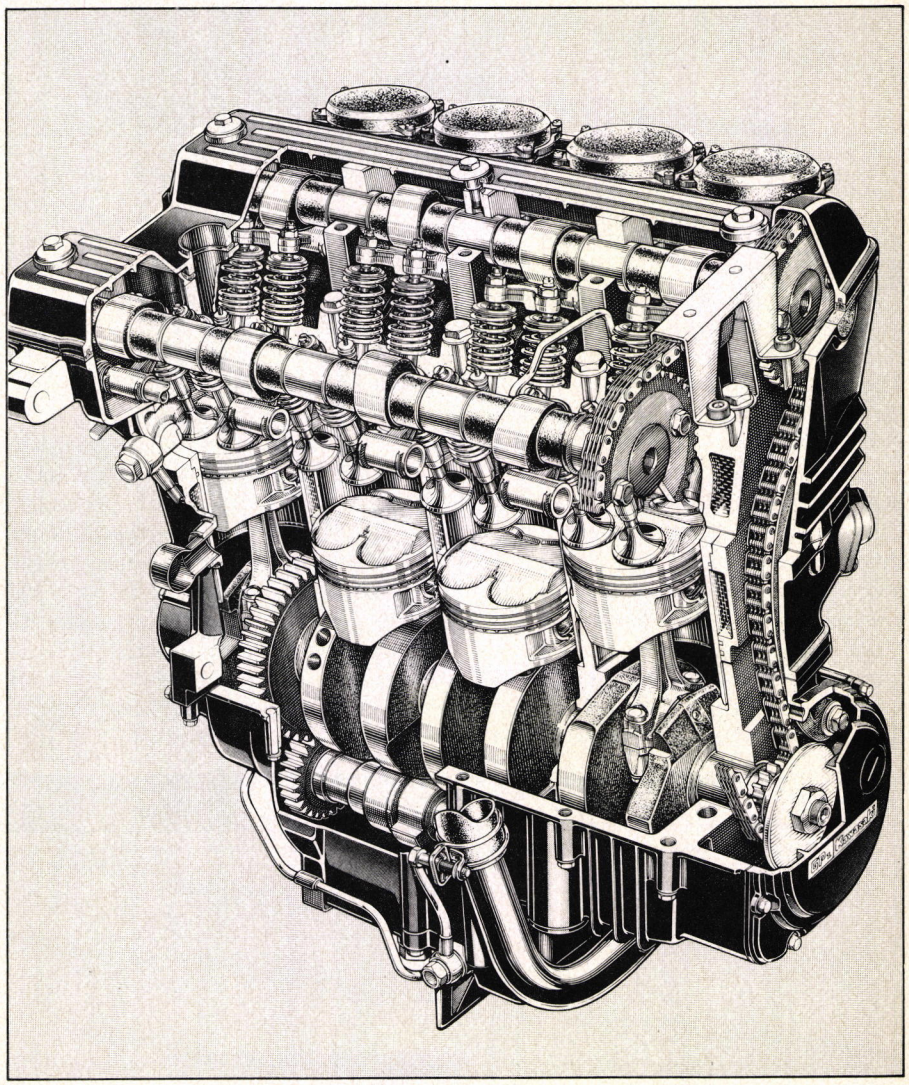


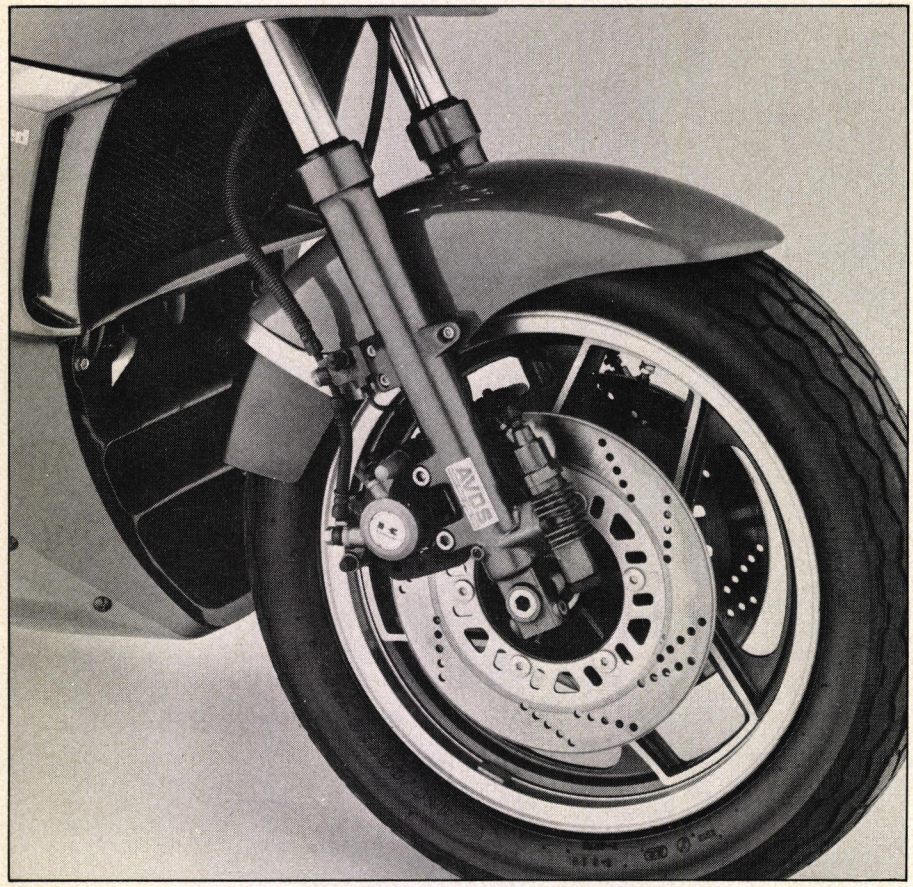
Frame is a composite of steel and aluminum tubing and cast-aluminum plates

But the pieces add up to one thing: steady, secure handling at speed.



Kawasaki enters the Eighties with liquid-cooling and four valves per cylinder

All in the familiar transverse, inline-four configuration.



Ninja shows off its variable-compression-damping fork and 16-inch front wheel

Dressed in the height of sportbike fashion.

would have prevented its use as a stressed member.

For the most part, the counterbalancer works as intended, as long as the engine is running in the lower half of its rev range. There, only a touch of vibration comes through the grips, pegs and gas tank. Start working the motor hard, though, up around six grand and beyond, and the buzzing can escalate to an annoying level. But at least the engine is smooth most of the time—and when it isn't, the rider probably will be occupied with more pressing matters, like dealing with the fact that the Ninja is really hauling.

And make no mistake; the Ninja *will* haul—through corners as well as along the straights. The bike feels almost tiny by hyperbike standards, and it responds to the same sort of pitch-it-in treatment that most smaller sportbikes favor. Thus, riding the Ninja hard is both exciting and gratifying because it lets you feel like you're using the motorcycle completely, exploiting everything it has to offer.

But the Ninja uses up a lot of what *you* have to offer, as well. It requires more muscle at the handlebars than you might expect of a bike with a 16-inch front wheel, especially through a series of esses. But Kawasaki prides itself on its bikes' stability, and so slowed the 16-incher's responsiveness by equipping the Ninja with a raked-out 29-degree steering head angle and 114mm of trail. As a result, while the Ninja takes less effort to initiate a corner than, say, the GPz1100, it takes more than other motorcycles fitted with 16-inch front wheels and less-conservative steering geometry. And although the Ninja is somewhat more agile than the 1100, it is just as stable, remaining rock-steady even at triple-digit speeds.

Even the racetrack failed to uncover any dark side of the Ninja's handling personality. In fact, the bike worked better at Willow Springs than it did on the street. The Ninja has an enough cornering clearance to allow full exploration of its handling potential, too; when the warning balls on the folding footpegs finally do touch down, the bike is already heeled over in GP-roadracing fashion. But even then, the Ninja still feels taut and secure.

Some of the credit for that taut feel goes to the suspension. The Ninja uses Kawasaki's Uni-Trak single-shock rear system, which offers four rebound damping positions and provisions for air-assist. With the shock set to No. 4 rebound damping and about 12 psi (7.1 to 21 psi is the suggested range), the bike is poised at speed over smooth pavement. But bumpy surfaces make the rear end feel harsh, and small, abrupt bumps get transmitted largely undiminished through the hard saddle. The same harshness surfaces during normal street riding, too, even with the shock adjusted to the softest of its recommended settings. Only disregarding Kawasaki's recommendations and bleeding all of the air pressure from the shock will result in a comparatively smooth ride.

Up front, the Ninja's suspension provokes no such complaints. The fork includes anti-dive units similar to those on the GPzs, plus Kawasaki's Automatic Variable Damping System (AVDS), which provides compression damping that is both position- and speed-sensitive. After about 2 inches of fork compression, the AVDS valve in each fork leg begins to close, thereby increasing the compression damping; there's also a

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Kawasaki Ninja-'84	11.181/123.62	146	523	126
Kawasaki GPz1100-'84	11.312/120.80	145	560	120
Honda VF1000F Interceptor-'84	11.121/123.45	150	536	125
Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo-'83	11.225/123.53	146	N/A	N/A
Yamaha XJ900 Seca-'83	11.949/113.20	128	499	135
Kawasaki KZ1000R-'82	11.849/116.73	134†	505	129

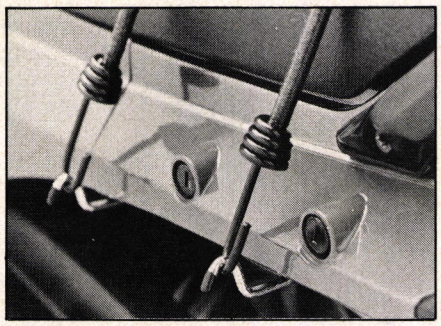
†indicates a calculated top speed

blowoff mechanism that allows the fork to respond to sharp bumps. And, whether set near the high end of its air-pressure adjustment range (5.7 to 8.5 psi is suggested) for speed, or the low end for comfort, the fork imparts a controlled, reasonably compliant ride over a variety of surfaces. The AVDS fork also assists the anti-dive system in reducing nosedive during hard braking, but the powerful, progressive binders have to be clamped on suddenly and firmly to make the anti-dive work.

Likewise, the Ninja has to be ridden hard to make best use of its racer-replica ergonomics. In-town riding quickly reveals a shortage of leg room, points up the considerable weight the seating position places on wrists and shoulders, and documents the saddle's firm padding. But the narrow seat doesn't intrude upon hanging-off gymnastics, and the high, rearset pegs and low, narrow handlebars position the rider nicely for fast cornering.

It's in that attitude, ripping along the backroads, where the Kawasaki is at its best. To be sure, the Ninja places demands upon its rider, whether going fast or slow, but it returns far more. And at a full-race pace, with the tach needle dancing at redline and a footpeg scraping an arc through a sweeper, the Ninja's precision is nothing short of magnificent.

Perhaps more important, though, is Kawasaki's intimation that the Ninja is the forerunner of a new model-line. That's cause for rejoicing for anyone whose throttle-hand twitches at the thought of a good sportbike; it also reaffirms Kawasaki's commitment to building thrilling, high-performance sporting machinery. And if those new Ninjas are as capable as this one, they won't be just good—they'll be great. •



Turn the Ninja into a high-speed pack horse

With these fold-out bungee-cord hooks.

Nits:

- Proximity of fuel petcock to rockerbox cover makes switching to reserve difficult.
- Mirrors offer insufficient view of area directly behind the bike.
- Shifting mechanism lacks Kawasaki's positive-neutral-finding device.

Picks:

- Ratcheting choke lever.
- Four-way warning flashers.
- Fold-down bungee cord hooks are convenient and well-thought-out.
- Cam-type adjusters automatically maintain rear wheel alignment during chain adjustment.

Ride Review

• Hah! You probably think that the Ninja is a liter-class hyperbike, but I know better. As I see it, this so-called 900 actually is the world's fastest GPz550. The Ninja certainly feels and handles a lot like one; and with its need to be prodded into action with five-digit rpm figures and fancy-dancing on the shift lever, it even runs like a 550—albeit one that's on steroids.

But that's why I enjoy the Ninja so much. It makes every ride seem like a full-blown roadrace, prompting me to keep the tach needle buried at all times and to apex everything in sight—corners, straightaways, on-ramps, off-ramps, cul de sacs, even any driveways that happen to get in my line of fire. It's an exhilarating, satisfying, fun machine to ride. But what else would you expect from the world's fastest GPz550?

—Paul Dean

• The Ninja is not for the unskilled nor the uncommitted sporting rider. Its engine and chassis are high-strung, its streetracer's focus honed scalpel-sharp. At loafing speeds the engine vibrates, and its barren midrange can leave the bike trailing a strong-running 750 in a roll-on contest.

When the road coils up into sweeping curves, though, the Ninja comes alive. The suspension works so well I found myself marveling at the suppleness and control of the front end. And the explosive powerband works perfectly for ultrafast riding. Kawasaki's new 900 represents a cleavage point between those who want to look like roadracers and those who want to ride like them. Poseurs will be appalled by the Ninja's ferocity; true believers will be inspired. *—Paul Gordon*

• Don't bother me with quarter-mile times when discussing the Ninja. So what if it isn't the quickest bike down a dragstrip? It's not a dragster, anyway; it's a sportbike, and one of the finest.

As far as I'm concerned, a sportbike's main purpose is to strafe apexes, not timing lights. And the Ninja always hits the target, because its cornering behavior is more like a smaller sportbike's; the 908cc Kawasaki has more horsepower, that's all. And like a smaller sportbike, the Ninja can be pitched hard into corners, while its suspension keeps the bike steady through the turn.

The Ninja has made a believer out of me: Quarter-mile times don't matter. It's how a sportbike gets from point A to B that counts. And for connecting the dots, the Ninja is perhaps the best.

—Dain Gingerelli

Continued

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Kawasaki Ninja *street*

IMPORTER: Kawasaki Motors Corp., 2009 East Edinger Avenue, Santa Ana, California 92711

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $4399

ENGINE

Type . . . . . liquid-cooled four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement . . . . . double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke . . . . . 72.5mm x 55.0mm
Displacement 908.2cc
Compression ratio 11.0:1
Engine redline . . . . . 10,500 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . four 34mm Keihin semi-flat-slide constant-vacuum
Air filter . . . . . dual-stage washable oiled foam element
Lubrication . . . . . wet sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 350-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 14-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . straight-cut gears; 1.732:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Final drive . . . #530 O-ring chain (5/8-in. pitch, 3/8-in. width); 2.941:1 (50/17) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.800	14.265	5.15
II	2.000	10.189	7.21
III	1.591	8.105	9.07
IV	1.333	6.793	10.82
V	1.154	5.878	12.51
VI	1.036	5.276	13.93

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Kayaba air-spring, 38mm stanchion tube diameter, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.2 in. (130mm)
Rear . . . . . single Kayaba air-spring shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/5.2 in. (131mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.8-in. (274mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 10.6-in. (268mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front . . . . . 120/80V16-V250 Dunlop F-17 tubeless
Rear . . . . . 130/80V18-V250 Dunlop K727 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

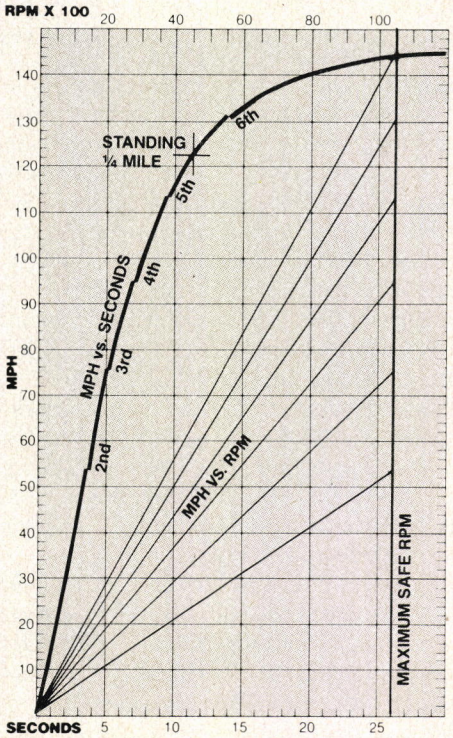
Weight . . . . . 523 lbs. (237.2kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 49.3% front, 50.7% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 946 lbs. (429kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 386 lbs. (175kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 58.8 to 59.8 in. (1493 to 1518mm)
Seat height . . . . . 30.8 in. (782mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 25.6 in. (650mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 12.7 in. (322mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . 5.0 in. (127mm), at lower cowling
Steering head angle . . . . . 29.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 4.49 in. (114mm)
Frame . . . . . mainframe of round-section mild-steel tubing; rear subframe of box-section aluminum tubing; cast-aluminum outer swingarm-pivot supports; no front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 4.2 qt. (4.0/)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 6.0 gal. (22.6/), including 0.6 gal. (2.2/) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, voltmeter, fuel gauge, coolant, temperature gauge

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 24 to 44 mpg (10 to 19km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 35 mpg (15km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . 144 to 264 miles (232 to 425km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . . 14 to 26 miles (23 to 42km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 29 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 51 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 11.181 sec., 123.62 mph (199 km/h)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 146 mph (235 km/h)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 30 ft. (9.1m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 126 ft. (38.4m)

WARRANTY: 12 months, unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: Firecracker Red with Metallic Greystone only



All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

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Kawasaki Ninja vs. Honda VF1000F Interceptor

The two new high-tech heavyweight contenders duke it out.

• For some, it might be easy to dismiss the Kawasaki GPz1100's defeat by the Honda VF1000F Interceptor (page 25) as merely a case of machine-gunning fish in a barrel. After all, the GPz1100 is getting somewhat long of tooth, what with its slow steering-response and an engine design that's firmly rooted in Kawasaki's Z-1 of more than 10 years ago, while the Interceptor represents far more recent technology. Well, this time around things aren't quite as easy for the VF1000F, because it has to go up against the Ninja, a motorcycle with fangs, and the quickest, fastest, most modern Kawasaki yet.

The bikes' first confrontation, at the dragstrip, failed to find a clear-cut victor. True, the Interceptor's 11.121-second/-123.45-mph time fractionally bettered the Ninja's best pass of 11.181/123.62, but the Honda's advantage is razor-thin. Yet the dragstrip did confirm what we'd already learned from seat-of-the-pants testing: With either bike, a twist of the wrist yanks the scenery past with a vengeance, instantly rocketing you clean out of the vicinity.

What the dragstrip couldn't separate, though, was how differently these two go about the business of accelerating. The Honda starts pulling, smooth and hard, as soon as you crack open the throttle, and accelerates with deceptive, almost vibration-free quickness in all five gears. The VF's powerband is the typical fare we've come to expect of vee-four Hondas, too: As long as all four plugs are firing, you're in the powerband; shifting becomes almost optional because of the amount and spread of power. The Ninja, on the other hand, can't compete with the VF's low-end punch, and needs to be revved through all six gears to best use its healthy top-end rush. There's nothing deceptive about the way the Ninja accelerates, though. The engine roars, it howls and vibrates, generating all the kinesthetics associated with speed.

Roll-ons from 55 mph further illustrate the engines' distinctly different styles of power delivery. With both bikes in top gear, rolling on the throttle shows the VF can dust the Ninja at will. Repeat the procedure with the Ninja in fifth, however, and it returns the favor: The VF gets the initial jump, but around 90 mph, when the Ninja hits its stride at 7500 rpm, it leaves the Honda for dead. But top-gear roll-ons from 100 mph reverse the situation again, as the VF resolutely motors away from the Ninja.

Some rapid backroad-charging sorts out more differences in style—if not ability—between the two motorcycles. The Honda turns quickly, and can be flicked through corners with a speed that belies its long, tall and slightly top-heavy feel. The top-heaviness also makes the VF resist combined braking/turning maneuvers. The trick is to use the brakes before initiating the corner, then dial on the tremendously strong, broad-band power to make an instant getaway. The VF requires deft throttle-control, though. Roll on too much too soon and the rear tire will break loose, something we found to be especially easy to do while testing at Willow Springs, where we could press the bikes to their limits.

On the street or on the track, the Ninja can equal the VF's cornering competence, but it takes more from the rider to do so. The Kawasaki does feel smaller than the Honda, and in fact weighs 13 pounds less, but its conservative steering geometry makes the bike feel heavier and slower to respond than the VF, even though both are equipped with 16-inch front wheels. That slower response, combined with the en-

gine's need to be kept in its high-rpm powerband to make good power, means the Ninja requires more rider input to be ridden extremely quickly.

To the Ninja's credit, though, is its slightly better cornering clearance than the VF's, and a willingness to turn while braking. Plus, the Ninja feels more taut and precise during hard cornering than the Interceptor. Both motorcycles could stand some improvement to their rear suspensions, however. The Kawasaki's back end feels oversprung, and the rider is jolted over bumpy roads. And the Honda needs a fourth rebound-damping adjustment for its shock; the third, and highest, setting lets the rear of the bike move around a bit when you're really charging.

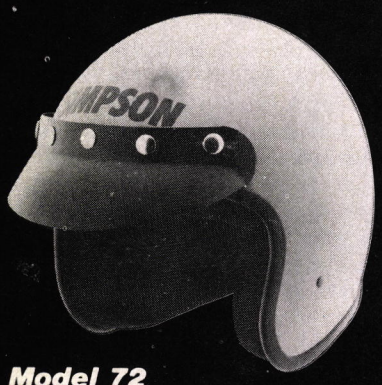
But don't misunderstand: The VF and the Ninja both excel as sportbikes, yet they require entirely different techniques. The Honda's responsiveness and bottomless power reserves allow what seems to be a relaxed pace, even when the bike is traveling blisteringly fast. The Kawasaki, however, with its slower steering and a narrower powerband, requires more control-effort and rider participation, and works better when ridden with abandon.

What about the times when these bikes aren't carving up canyon roads, when comfort, rather than absolute cornering ability, becomes important? That's when the Interceptor's size, suspension and power place it well ahead of the Ninja. The VF offers a far more compliant ride, and its saddle is a more comfortable place to perch, too. On top of that, the VF feels roomier, while its handlebars place the rider more upright than is the case with the Ninja, and don't force him to support as much weight on his wrists and shoulders. The Interceptor's abundant low-end power also contributes to the Honda's all-around usefulness.

And it's precisely there, closer to Main Street U.S.A. than to Canyon Country, that the VF1000F emerges as the winner. True, both the Honda and the Kawasaki are marketed as sportbikes, but they're streetbikes, too. The Ninja is a bare-knuckles backroad brawler with one thing on its mind, and that's going as hard and fast as its rider dares. The VF1000F lacks the Ninja's bug-eyed, muscle-bound personality, but it can perform the same variety of tasks, and offers its rider more comfort while doing so.

—Charles Everitt

Carbon Fiber



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PRODUCT EVALUATION:

K-V Dyna RPM Limiter

Ignitus Interruptus.

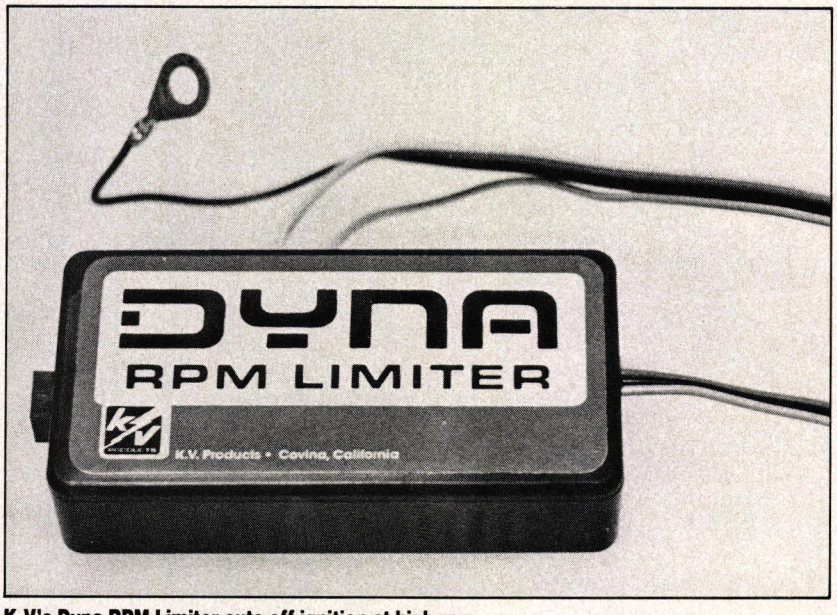
• Few experiences approach the adrenaline rush of charging out of a corner at wide-open throttle and hearing the valves float as the engine screams past redline. But if the sound of imminent, costly engine repair is not music to your ears, the alternative might be a K-V Dyna RPM Limiter.

K-V's limiter is a solid-state unit that limits engine speed by reducing the ignition-circuit voltage to a point at which sparks are no longer produced. The device is inifinitely adjustable between 6000 to 13,000 rpm, and is designed to work with any inductive (non-CDI) ignition (although the system reportedly works with K-V's own CDI). The rev-limiter consists of an epoxy-sealed "black-box"about the size of a pack of cigarettes, and a wiring harness that includes connections for ground and for the primary side of one coil and the ignition side of either one or two coils.

As simple as the unit sounds, its installation is complicated by a sketchy set of instructions. The wiring diagram shown is generic, and gives no directions for identifying the connections on particular motorcycles. Once the wiring was deciphered, however, installation on a 1984 KZ700 took only a few minutes. Most of the time was spent finding a place to mount the "black-box." The wiring harness is rather short, so the mounting options are somewhat limited, especially so on bikes without fairings.

With the unit in place, setting the rpm limit is simple. The limiter has a small screwdriver-adjustable dial on the side, with index marks for specific cutoff points. The marks are for reference only, and with a little trial and error the limit can be set at any point within the two extremes. Because the dial moves easily, K-V recommends holding it in place with a piece of tape.

Once set, the Rev-Limiter is unobtrusive during normal riding, but when the engine hits the preadjusted rpm, the power drops like a truck off a cliff. When the unit was wired to cut out both coils on the KZ, the engine backfired erratically if held at redline, but resumed normal firing as soon as the throttle was dialed back. Wiring the limiter to cut only one coil reduced the backfiring and softened the power dropoff. But regardless of which way it was wired, the RPM Limiter never let the engine exceed the set rpm. For riders whose throttle hands sometimes get carried away, the Dyna RPM Limiter could prove to be cheap insurance against overrevving—and considerably cheaper than an engine rebuild. The unit retails for $59.95, and is available from K-V Products, Dept. CG, 1060 East Cypress St., Covina, California 91724. —*Jim Miller*



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K-V's Dyna RPM Limiter cuts off ignition at high rpm

Consider it your bike's insurance against the ravages of ratchet wrist.

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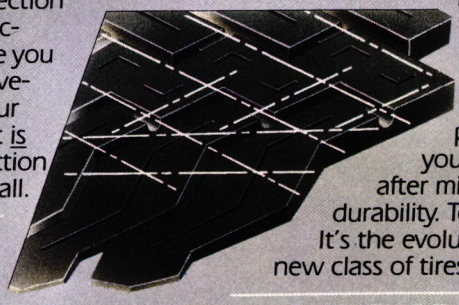

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OPTIMAX

*Sportmax available Spring, 1984.

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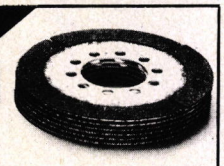

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PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Hondaline Sport Leathers

American cowhide, European fit.

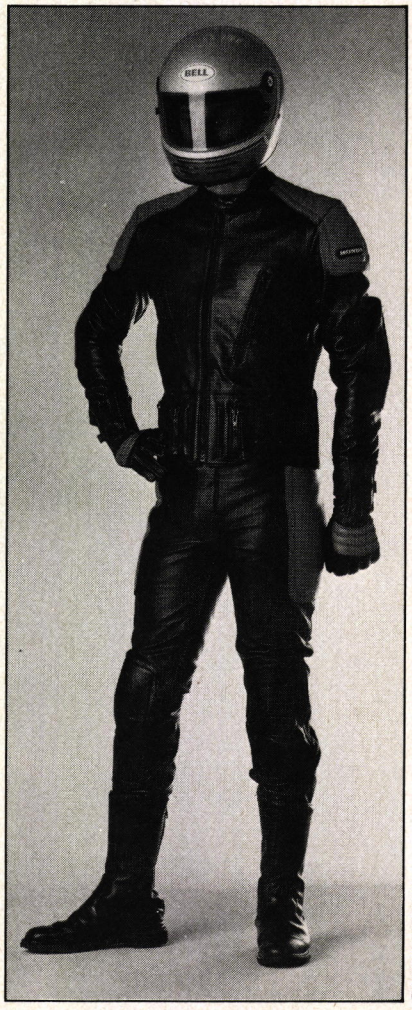
• Leather has been a part of American motorcycling since before Harley met Davidson, but complete leather suits—one-piece and two-piece—traditionally have been associated with European tastes. Recently, though, full suits, like the Hondaline Sport Leathers designed by the German firm Hein Gericke, sewn in Korea and sold by Honda dealers, have become popular with American motorcyclists.

Despite the Hondaline suit's European influence, however, the styling of these leathers still is closer to Levi than Gucci. And while $324.90 ($184.95 for the jacket, $139.95 for the pants) is more than pocket change, for a full leather suit the price is closer to Levi's, too. The suit's predominant color is basic black, and the waist-length jacket has an external kidney belt and enough heavy zippers to satisfy American traditionalists. Untraditional, however, is the bit of continental flair added by the gray shoulder, elbow and thigh pads, and by the snug fit of the jacket. Both jacket and pants are lined with nylon taffeta, while the jacket has an additional layer of polyester insulation, and vertical stretch panels set into its back.

Because of those stretch panels, the tight fit of the jacket isn't uncomfortable; but the pants can be confining for sport riding, and can make swinging out a knee when hanging-off somewhat awkward. And if the jacket is worn alone, it rides up until the wind whistles up your back. Wearing the pants and jacket zipped together eliminates that breeze, but unless you have a linebacker's neck, the large, non-adjustable collar opening will allow a draft between your shoulder blades. Still, with the two sections zipped together, or with a muffler sealing the collar, the suit is quite comfortable in cool weather.

In warm weather, however, the leathers might join your sweaters in the closet. The jacket and pant cuffs have no gussets, so unzipping the sleeves for additional ventilation in hot weather allows the cuffs to flap in the wind. The suit also has large zippers that snag clothing easily, and the zippers on the pant cuffs dig into your ankles when the pants are tucked into riding boots. If you wear tight-fitting boots, it's much more comfortable—though perhaps not as stylish—to wear the pants over your riding boots.

If you're looking for more than style and comfort in a set of leathers, however, you might think twice about the Hondaline Sport Leathers. Although the leather is Grade-A American cowhide and is very supple, it is noticeably thinner than the hides used by some other companies. When one of our staffers touched a knee down in full-berzerk cornering, the contact instantly buffed a dime-size hole through the knee pad. That kind of accelerated wear shows that these leathers are just as much fashion garments as they are any kind of protective gear. *—Jim Miller*



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TRACK TEST:

Can-Am 560 Sonic MX

Playracing just became serious business.

• Most motocross bikes are lies. You can see them distorting the truth in the hills and on practice tracks as they're ridden by owners who want the fastest, lightest, most serious dirtbikes made, but who have no desire to get involved in organized competition. That's because it's an accepted fact that most motocross bikes never turn a wheel in an actual motocross race. They instead end up being racers with no place to race, playbikes that usually are too pipey and temperamental to be well-suited for the job.

Can-Am's Sonic MX is a lie, too—but a different sort of lie. As its "MX" suffix states, the Sonic is a designated motocrosser, but it's a four-stroke, which is a deception in itself. After all, no thumper has made it big in motocross since BSA hung up its knobbies more than 10 years ago. But Can-Am isn't trying to change that—not right now, at least. The company simply is approaching the situation from another angle: Instead of being a motocrosser that can be used as a playbike, the Sonic is a playbike that can be used as a motocrosser.

Not that this Can-Am shouldn't be raced; it's just that for serious MX combat against modern two-strokes, the Sonic has numerous disadvantages. For one, the Sonic hits the scales at 268 pounds with no fuel, whereas most Open-class two-stroke MXers weigh around 230 pounds. Granted, the new Sonic is four pounds lighter than last year's 500cc model, thanks to refinements such as an aluminum swingarm and a new White Power shock that weighs less than the Ohlins used previously; but the motor *gained* weight as an indirect result of having its bore enlarged from 89mm to 94mm (bringing the displacement up to 562cc). That move alone wouldn't have made the engine heavier, but it would have increased vibration to an unacceptable level; so a gear-driven counterbalancer was installed in front of the crank, thereby nullifying much of the weight saved elsewhere. Thus the Sonic still is heavy by MX standards, and as you might guess, wrangling that much machine around the track can be tiring.

Weight isn't the Sonic's only disadvantage on an MX course, since the engine doesn't quite have the power to beat a two-stroke at its own game. At the start of a race, practically any new Open-class two-stroke MXer will make the Can-Am seem like it's been welded to the start gate. The 560 will, however, out-motor just about any other stock four-stroke single—including, obviously, last year's 500cc Sonic. Compared to that '83 model, the 560 produces noticeably more power in the low and middle rpm ranges before leveling off with about the same amount of peak power at about the same rpm. But that peak rpm is higher than that of any other stock Open-class four-stroke we've tested, and the engine also revs more quickly (although the addition of the counterbalancer has given it more flywheel inertia than the '83 model). Nonetheless, in the real world of ultra-powerful Open-class berm-killers, the Sonic is just 268 pounds of fodder for the big guns.

But Can-Am never intended the Sonic MX to be a single-faceted MXer; the company has the 500MX two-stroke for that duty. And, at anything less than a full-race charge around the track, the Sonic is a pleasure to ride. Its power comes on so smoothly and tractably that traction is rarely a problem, and the bike turns corners as quickly and precisely as any of the new breed of steeply raked two-strokes, despite its

weight disadvantage. A rider needs a little while to learn the right techniques for riding the Sonic, but once he does, he gives away nothing in the corners.

So, too, does the suspension work well, especially considering that it must cope with so much weight. The shock and fork springs on last year's Sonic were too soft for even a moderate motocross pace, but the new bike is much stiffer at both ends, making it better suited for racing and hard riding. But that still doesn't keep the Can-Am from causing trouble if it gets sideways on closely spaced whoops. Once the rear end starts hopping side-to-side, the bike's weight makes its presence known, and recovery becomes extremely difficult. When that happens, there's just one sure cure: roll off the throttle.

On smoother terrain, though, the Sonic seldom, if ever, steps out of line. It has superb high-speed stability, never twitching or wiggling during fifth-gear assaults on fast fireroads, which makes it a natural for cross-country riding. And although the Sonic is extremely tall and sprung rather stiffly, it is surprisingly agile on tight trails, largely because of its crisp steering and ever-present, tractable power. About all this so-called MX bike needs to be perfectly trail-worthy is a suitable silencer/spark-arrestor to soften the booming of its unmuffled exhaust. In fact, its exhaust note is so loud and raspy that some sanctioning bodies might require that the bike be quieted before it can compete in a motocross race.

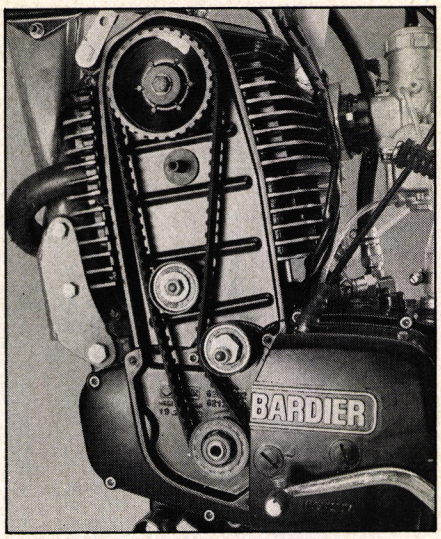
Still, MX racing isn't the Sonic's cup of tea, no matter what it says in the owner's manual. This is a bike that's at its best when the only objective is to have fun, when the sport of playing replaces the business of racing. It's easy to understand why Can-Am has called the Sonic a motocross bike, since that image seems to be what's required to sell a high-buck dirtbike—which, at $3048, the Sonic most certainly is. But for that three grand you get more than a mere motocrosser; you get the most sophisticated, most serious—and possibly the best—playbike in the world. And until four-stroke motocross racing catches on in this country, you also get one of the biggest, most expensive lies on two wheels.

—Ron Lawson

CAN-AM 560 SONIC MX

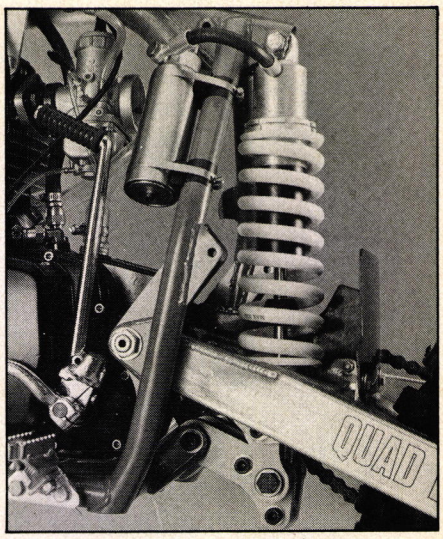
IMPORTER: Bombardier Corporation
Box 6106
Duluth, Minnesota 55806

Category	motocross
Suggested retail price	$3048
Engine type	four-stroke vertical single
Valve arrangement	single overhead camshaft, four valves
Bore and stroke	94.0mm x 81.0mm
Displacement	562.1cc
Compression ratio	9.8:1
Carburetion	one 38mm Mikuni slide/needle
Gearbox	5-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Marzocchi air-spring, 40mm stanchion tube diameter/ 11.7 in. (298mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	single White Power shock, 7-position adjustable compression damping, 11-position adjustable rebound damping, 23mm spring preload range/12.4 in. (314mm)
Wheelbase	60.2 to 61.0 in. (1529 to 1550mm)
Seat height	37.6 in. (956mm)
Weight	268 lbs. (121.5kg)
Steering head angle	28.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.24 in. (108mm)
Top speed (observed)	91 mph (146 km/h)
Warranty	none
Available color	white only



Gilmer belt drives the Can-Am cam

A good stiff belt never hurts.



New shock and swingarm reduce weight

Lightening strikes twice.

DETAIL PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 DAVID DEWHURST

Honda ATC250R vs. Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate

The trickest of the trikes play a game of two on three.

• A motorcyclist stepping into the world of ATV racing might easily get a feeling of déjà vu. That's because today's three-wheelers are retracing steps taken by the motorcycle industry years ago—before the onset of extreme moto-specialization. Those were the days before the general-purpose motorcycle became obsolete, when bikes like Yamaha's DT-1 were seen in every type of competition from enduros to motocross and cross-country events.

The beginnings of the same process that eventually replaced DT-1s with YZs are evident in the Honda ATC250R and the Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate. These machines are all-out racers, and as such represent the narrowest focus in the ATV business. Even so, the process isn't quite complete, because a wide range of activities falls under the heading "racing." These machines are targeted for all kinds of competition, whether it's motocross or cross-country, organized or just for fun.

In Kawasaki's case, there's another target, too. The KXT marks a concentrated attack on the front gate of Honda's strongest fortification, and it's aimed to take on the ATC in the showrooms as well as on the tracks. To that end, the Kawasaki has several features the Honda lacks. Most obvious of these is liquid-cooling. The KXT engine was lifted almost straight from the KX250 motocrosser, with only an increase in crank weight, slight changes in porting, and wider gear ratios to adapt the motor to three-wheel use. The KXT also is larger than the Honda, with a longer wheelbase and a wider track. That wide track combines with low-profile tires to orient the Tecate more toward the racer than the playrider, a point further demonstrated by the KXT's motorcycle-type twistgrip and plastic fuel tank.

Kawasaki knows, however, that the ATC250R is a pattern for success, so in many other ways the Tecate and the Honda adhere to the same formula. Each has front suspension, rising-rate, single-shock rear suspension, and a few non-race odds and ends such as a spark arrestor and a headlight. And both engines originally were based on motocrossers. But since the ATC250R's introduction, the machine has taken its own evolutionary path, until its motor has almost nothing in common with the CR250R's—a fact clearly demonstrated by the ATC's gear-driven counterbalancer. The future might well see the Tecate and the KX engines drift apart in the same fashion, but for now Kawasaki wants the no-nonsense image offered by a hardcore MX engine, again making it clear that the KXT is gunning for Honda's high-performance image.

On the racetrack, Kawasaki's shooting is right on target, too. The KXT's wide track and low-profile tires make it the best-turning stock three-wheeler so far. Most ATVs will only turn with the throttle open and the rider's weight all on the inside. But the Tecate requires less weight transfer, less throttle and generally less effort. All of which means you can race the KXT longer, harder—and most important, faster than any other stock ATV.

In the turns, the Honda feels more like a

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST

The Tecate is a hardcore ATV racer

And the best turning three-wheeler yet.

traditional three-wheeler; but there's little room for tradition on the racetrack. Low-pressure balloon tires might have been helpful in the days when ATVs had no suspension, but they're a hindrance on a modern three-wheeled racer. The Honda's tires prevent the machine from sliding easily, and because sliding is the only way to turn a three-wheeler, that means the ATC doesn't turn easily. And while the tires add an inch or so of suspension travel, that extra travel is undamped, so the Honda rocks side-to-side as its tires rebound from small bumps.

Low-pressure tires are better-suited to cross-country racing, and that's where the ATC is most at home. Riding in riverbeds or in the desert, the Honda hooks up well, and its suspension (tires and all) is stiffer than the Kawasaki's, making the ATC predictable over rough terrain at high speed. Whenever that kind of speed is required, though, the Kawasaki still has the upper hand. The KXT has more top-end power than the ATC, which makes the Kawasaki more practical for Baja-type adventures, where the ability to run flat-out takes on great importance. The one situation in which the ATC can out-race the KXT is in low-speed, tight terrain like rocky sand washes, where the Kawasaki's wider track can make squeezing through closely spaced obstacles difficult, and the Honda's greater low-end power proves an advantage.

The experience Honda gathered from more than decade of making ATCs yielded a few other advantages, as well. For example, the ATC's kickstarter kicks forward—the opposite of the Tecate's—so the rider's foot doesn't hit the right rear wheel or fender. And the fenders are sturdy enough so they don't hit the wheels when landing from a jump, as do the Tecate's. The ATC also has a better front brake, and vibrates less than the Tecate. In one other respect, though, Honda hasn't learned enough from all of its experience: The ATC still has a hard-to-reach thumb-controlled throttle lever that Honda claims is an advantage in icy climates and for beginners. The 250R was meant for neither of these, and many owners replace the thumb control with a twistgrip.

Honda's ATC250R used to be all alone

Now it's dueling with another triple.

If those riders intend to race their ATCs against KXTs, they'll have to replace a lot more than a throttle control, too. As a stock race machine, the Kawasaki undeniably is superior to the Honda. The ATC might fare better against the Tecate in general-purpose riding, but these machines aren't intended for general-purpose riding. They're highly refined racers, and together they represent the highest degree of specialization ever set on three wheels. The Kawasaki, however, is the more specialized of the two. And its specialty is winning.

—Ron Lawson

HONDA ATC250R

IMPORTER: American Honda Motor Company Inc.
100 West Alondra Boulevard
Gardena, California 90247

Category	three-wheeled all-terrain vehicle
Suggested retail price	$2148
Engine type	two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one exhaust
Bore and stroke	70.0mm x 64.4mm
Displacement	247.8cc
Compression ratio (corrected)	7.3:1
Carburetion	one 30mm Keihin slide/needle
Starting system	primary kick
Gearbox	5-speed
Front suspension/wheel travel	Showa air-spring, 35mm stanchion tube diameter/8.8 in. (223mm)
Rear suspension/wheel travel	single Showa shock, 14-position adjustable compression damping, 14-position adjustable rebound damping, 23mm spring preload range/8.0 in. (202mm)
Wheelbase	49.4 to 50.4 in. (1254 to 1279mm)
Seat height	28.9 in. (735mm)
Weight	311 lbs. (141.0kg)
Top speed (observed)	62 mph (100 km/h)
Warranty	6 months
Available colors	red only

KAWASAKI KXT250 TECATE

IMPORTER: Kawasaki Motors Corp.
2009 East Edinger Avenue
Santa Ana, California 92711

Category	three-wheeled all-terrain vehicle
Suggested retail price	$1999
Engine type	liquid-cooled two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one main exhaust,two booster exhausts
Bore and stroke	70.0mm x 64.9mm
Displacement	249.8cc
Compression ratio (corrected)	8.3:1
Carburetion	one 32mm Mikuni slide/needle
Starting system	primary kick
Gearbox	5-speed
Front suspension/wheel travel	Kayaba air-spring, 36mm stanchion tube diameter/8.6 in. (218mm)
Rear suspension/wheel travel	single Kayaba shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 20mm spring preload range/8.2 in. (207mm)
Wheelbase	49.2 to 50.6 in. (1249 to 1285mm)
Seat height	29.7 in. (754mm)
Weight	319 lbs. (144.7kg)
Top speed (observed)	66 mph (106 km/h)
Warranty	90 days
Available colors	green; red

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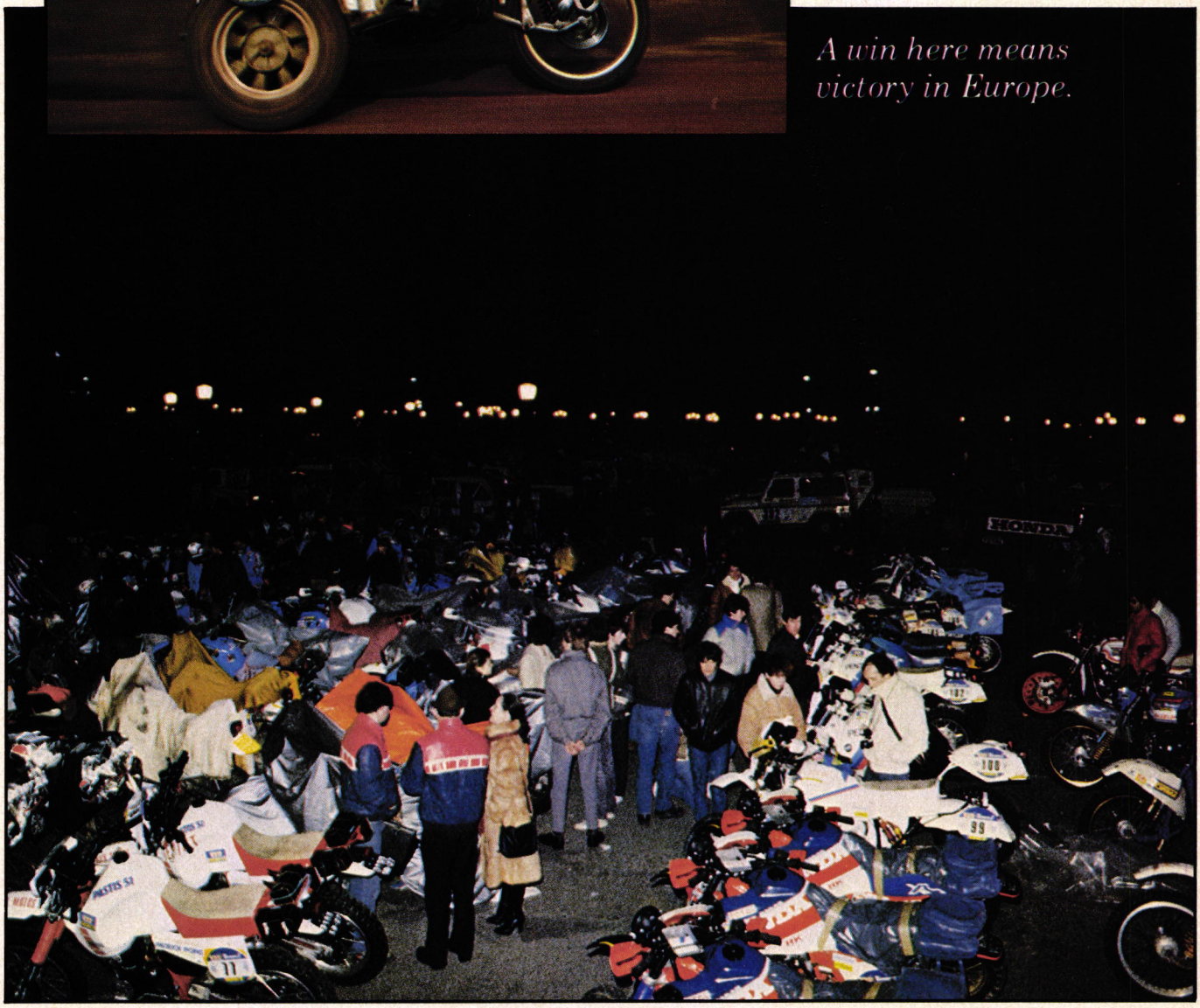
SPORT LINES

Cycle Guide's True Tales of Race Courses, Dark Horses and Machines at Speed

BY DAIN GINGERELLI

The North African Campaign

A win here means victory in Europe.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 PATRICK BEHAR

Continued

• It takes more than just good navigation and fast riding to win the Paris-to-Dakar Rally. It takes three weeks of all-out effort, motorcycles reliable enough to survive the 7000-mile course, and if the past is any indication, a 980cc engine. That's the combination BMW used to win its second consecutive high-speed African safari. And BMW not only won this year's rally, all its bikes finished, as well: Gaston Rahier led the romp, followed by Hubert Auriol (second) and Raymond Loizeaux (fifth).

BMW's large-displacement twins seemed far better-suited to this year's course than were the bikes of its competition, primarily 600cc single-cylinder bikes from Honda and Yamaha. The opposed-twins' higher top speeds practically flattened the opposition across the wide-open stretches of the Sahara Desert. And when the rally organizers changed the course at the last minute to bypass a section of Algeria (by order of the Algerian government, which is considering making that section a national park), the change suited the BMWs even more. The detour meant another day of top-gear, full-throttle riding, and the additional high-speed racing all but wiped out any chance the Japanese singles had to win.

The win served notice, too, that the Yamaha XT- and Honda XL-based 600s are too small for head-to-head racing against literbikes such as the BMW. Honda's Cyril Neveu, who finished fourth this year, said, "This engine (XL600R) is stretched all the way. A single will never

A privateer sleeps next to his bike

The only comfort in racing the Paris-to-Dakar is in finishing.

HEAVYWEIGHT REVIEWS.

"...108 bhp, 0-60 in 4 seconds, a top speed of 140 mph... (it's) exactly what a Superbike is supposed to be."
CYCLE WORLD Magazine, Nov. 1983

The mighty Suzuki GS1100ED was so well received by the editors of *Cycle World*, they couldn't help calling it the Superbike of the Year for 1983. And considering the 1100's enormous power and precise handling, it's easy to see why.

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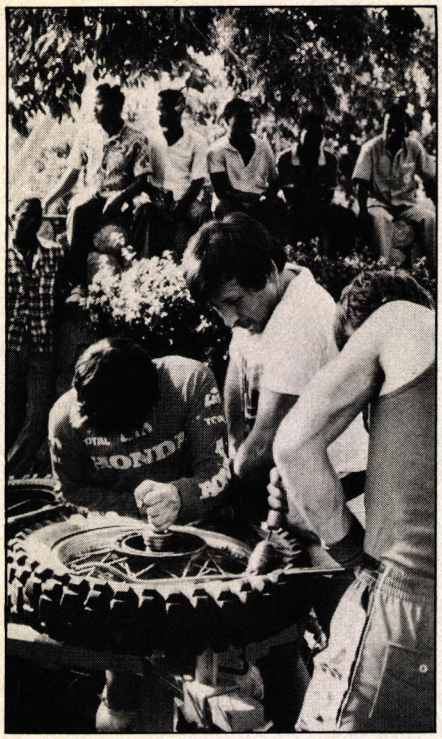
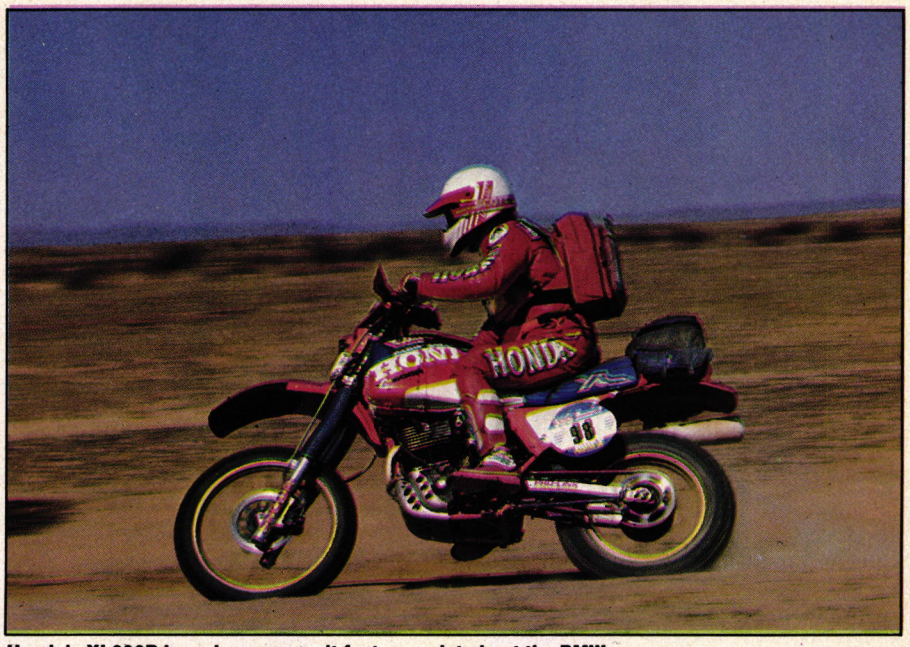


Mechanics change a tire in Nigeria

The workshop is somebody's backyard.



Honda's XL600R-based racer wasn't fast enough to beat the BMWs

There's talk of running the vee-twin 750 next year.

beat the BMWs, except by mechanical troubles by them (the BMW team)."

There is speculation that Honda will return next year with an air-cooled, vee-twin, off-road bike. Neveu's teammate (and the highest-placing non-BMW rider) Philippe

Continued

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Honda technology.

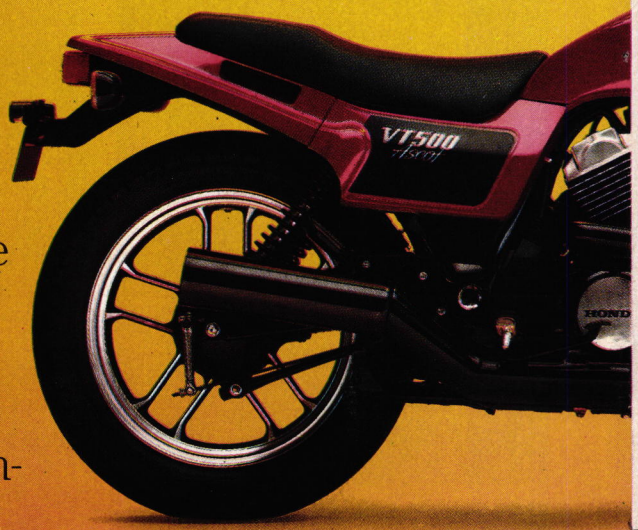
To begin with, we designed an offset, dual-pin crankshaft. So you get perfect, primary balance in a 52° V-twin.

For good measure we added three-valve twin-plug heads and liquid cooling.

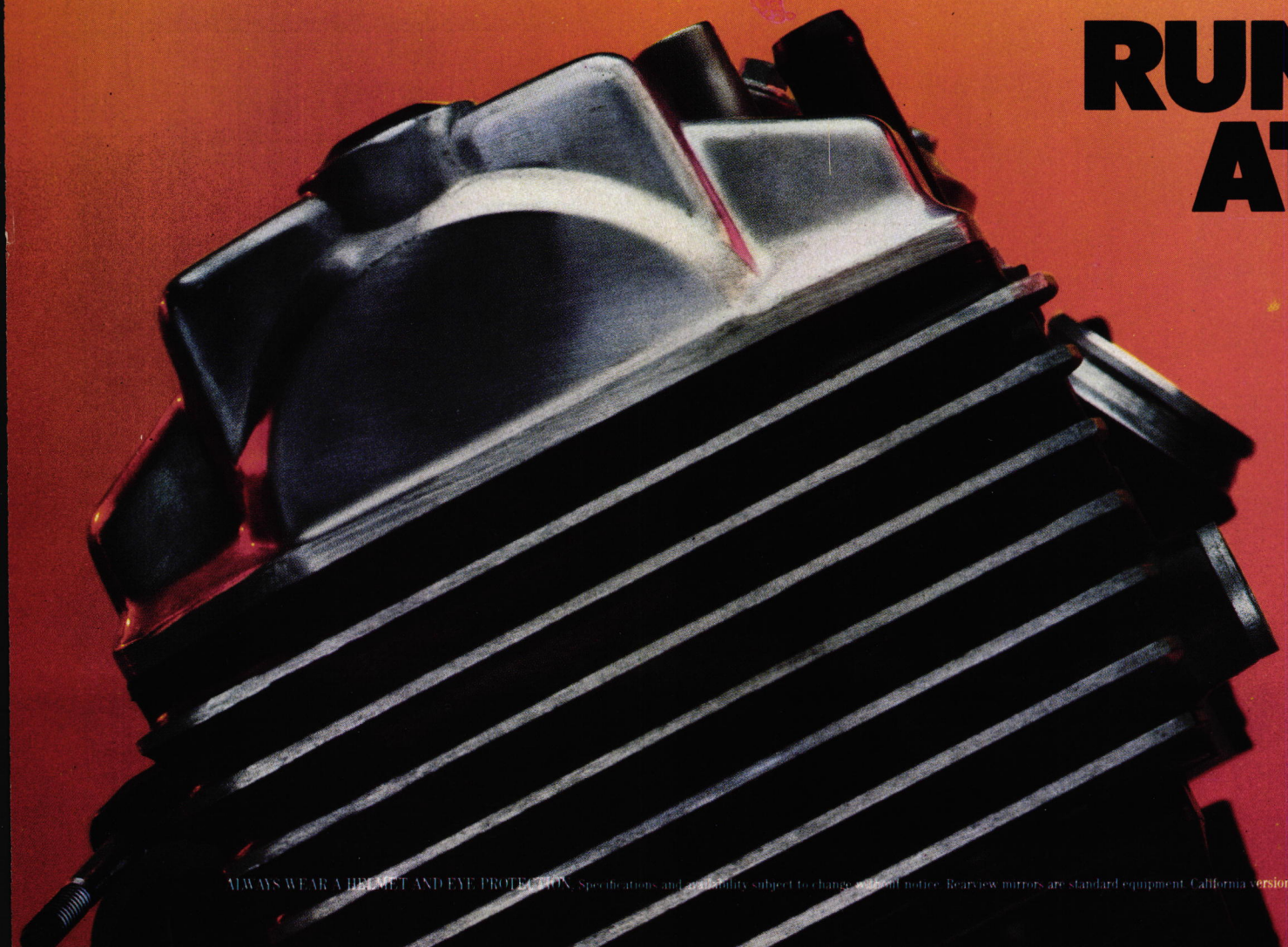
The result?

The VT500 Ascot.™

A mid-sized sport bike that gives you incredible handling. That stays cool for consistent high performance.



RUN
AT



ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET AND EYE PROTECTION. Specifications and availability subject to change without notice. Rearview mirrors are standard equipment. California version differs

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Now you have a bike that can handle just about anything. Anytime. Anywhere.

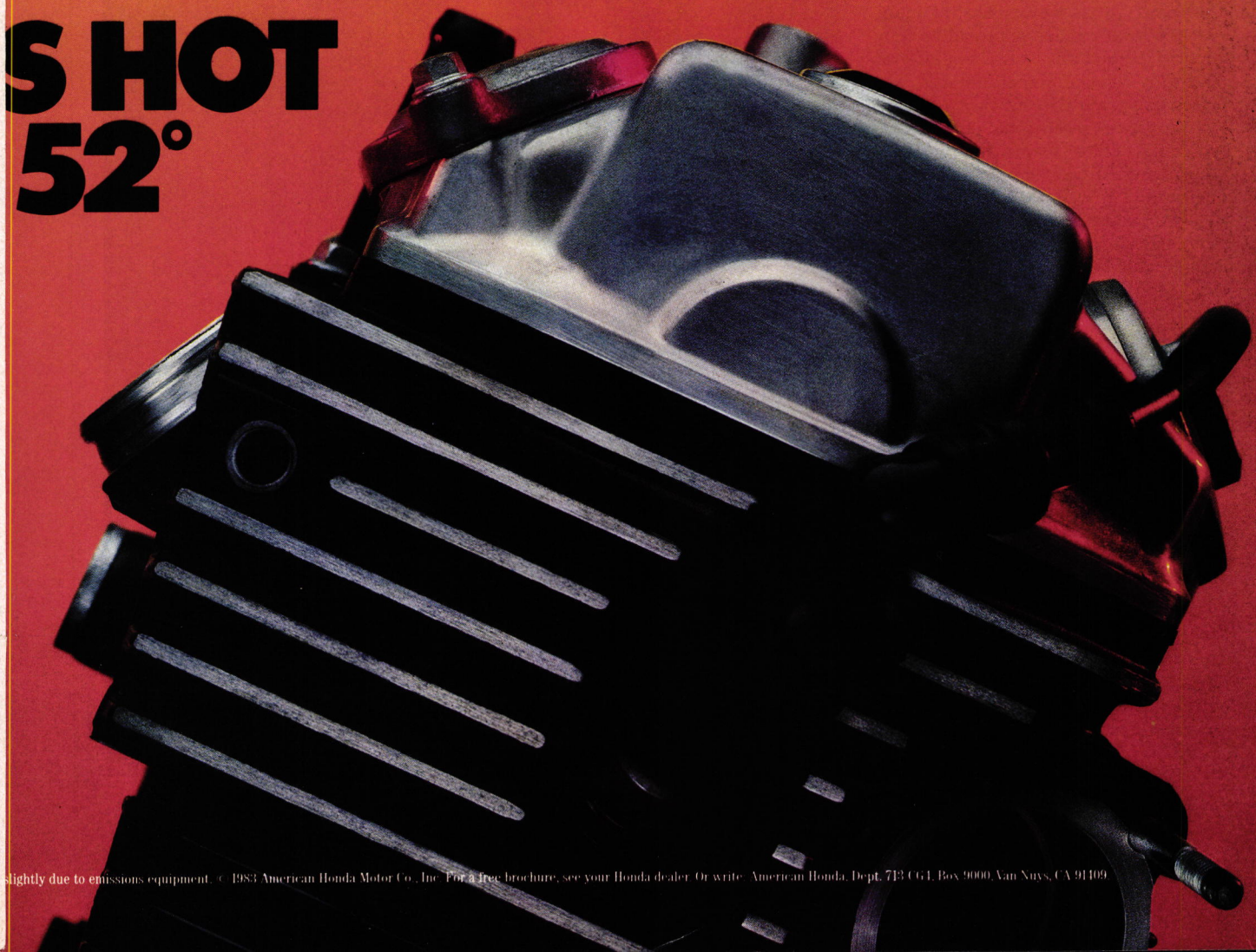
A bike that's at home on city streets. Country lanes. A tight canyon road.

Honda's VT500 Ascot. Because high performance is a matter of degrees.

HONDA

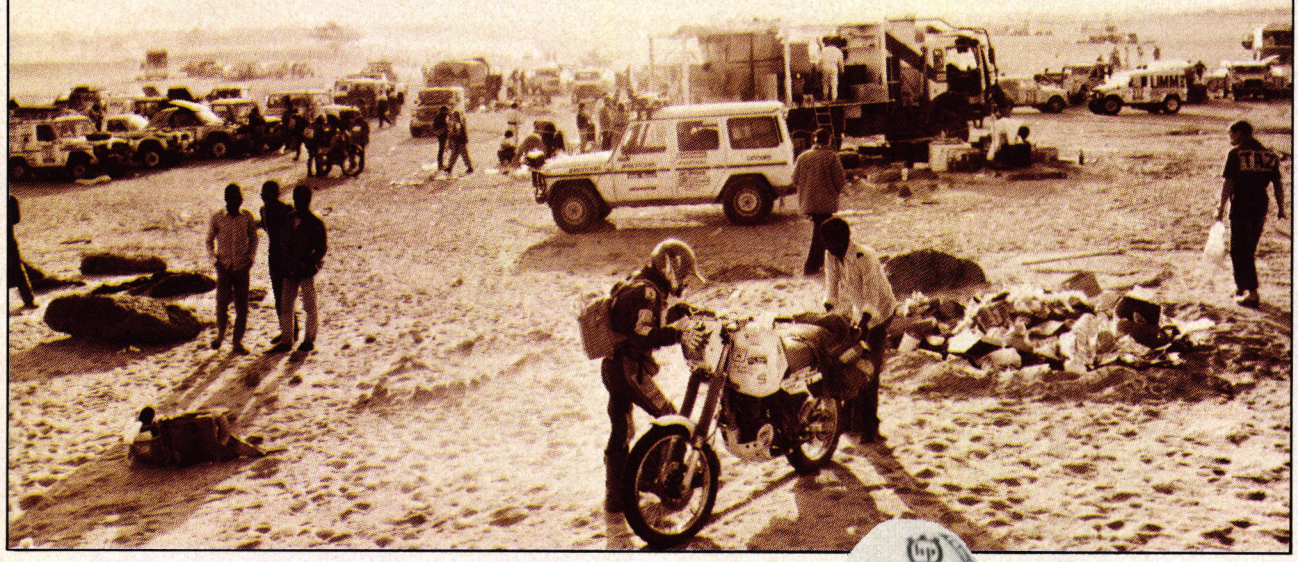
FOLLOW THE LEADER

S HOT 52°



slightly due to emissions equipment. © 1983 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. For a free brochure, see your Honda dealer. Or write: American Honda, Dept. 713 CG-1, Box 50000, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

America-to-Paris-to-Dakar



• While the Paris-to-Dakar Rally has been an all-European affair in the past, it might not always be so. Americans have begun to show interest in the three-week, 7000-mile, off-road excursion through North Africa.

There's little question that many American off-road racers could be competitive at the Paris-to-Dakar, too. Even two-time winner Hubert Auriol, who raced in the most recent Baja 1000, figures American racers could put in a good showing. "The terrain is similar to Baja," said Auriol, "and I think Americans would do well."

Auriol says there are certain aspects of the African race that the Americans would have to take into account. Foremost, said Auriol, is the length of the race. Three weeks of riding requires that a rider pace himself, just to be able to finish. Pacing could pose problems for the Americans, who are used to WFO-riding through the Baja, California and Arizona deserts. Also, navigation plays a key role; Auriol himself got lost this year, and in the process all but handed the rally win to his BMW teammate Gaston Rahier.

Still, the question remains: Will American riders flock to France for the Paris-to-Dakar? While being the first Yank ever to win this international event undoubtedly would be a feather in any American rider's cap, the primary stumbling block is the money necessary to field a competitive entry. And because, so far, Paris-to-Dakar means big bucks to European, rather than American sales, don't look for the entry list to swell with American names soon.

—Dain Gingerelli

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Husqvarna's Larry Roeseler, of American cross-country and ISDE fame

Come next year, will he join the Africa corps?

Continued

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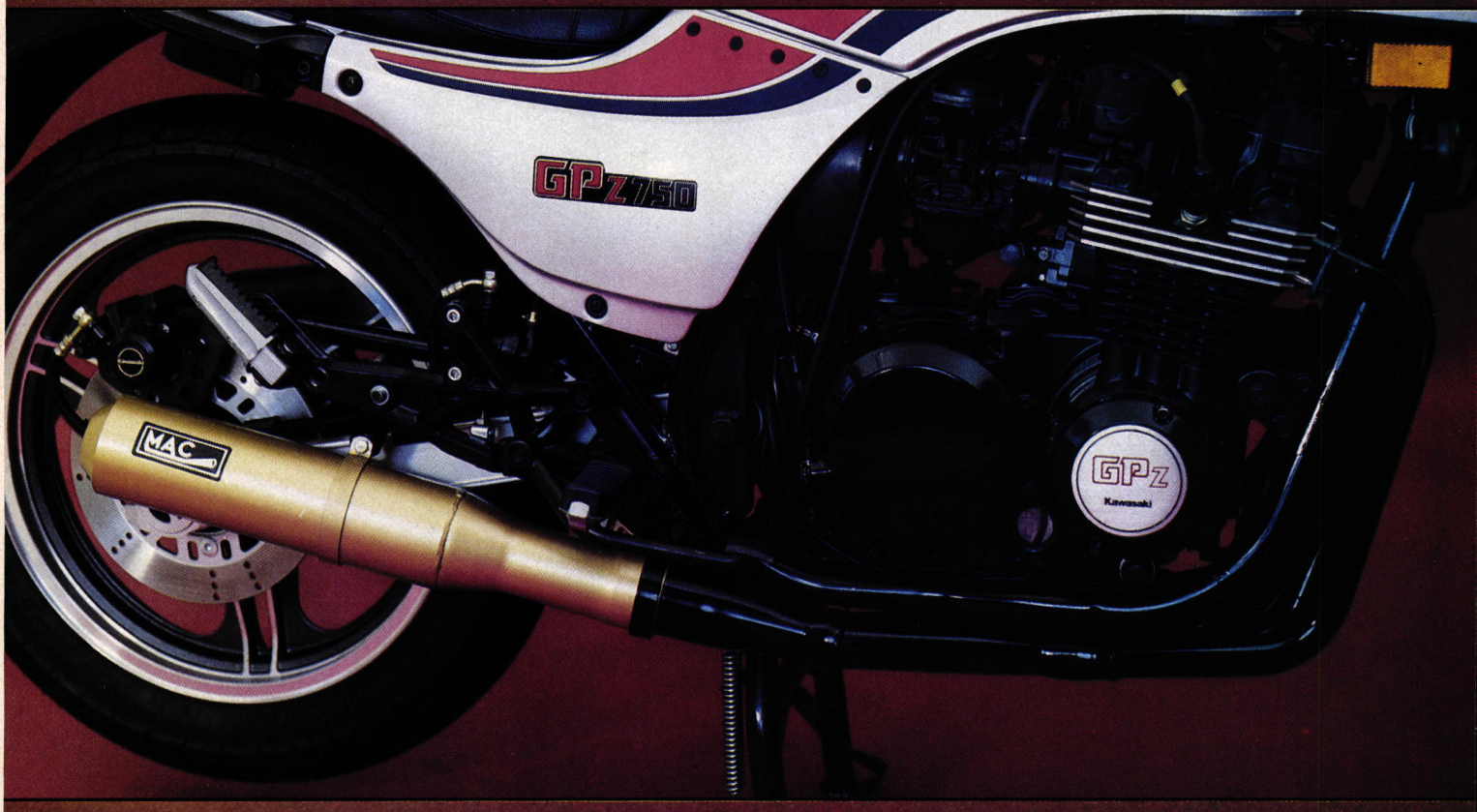

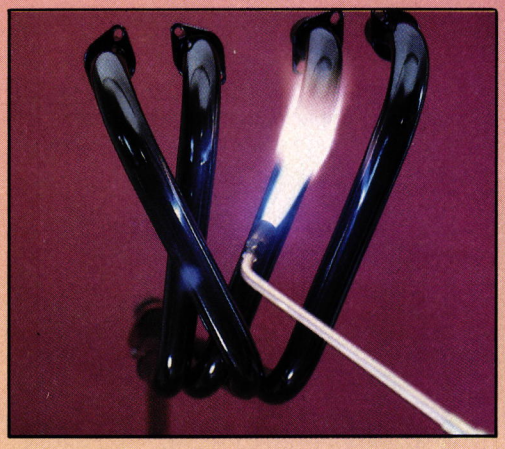

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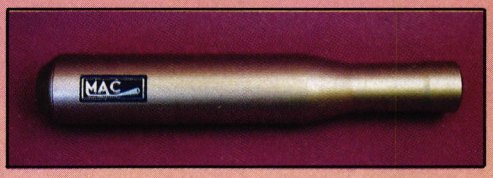

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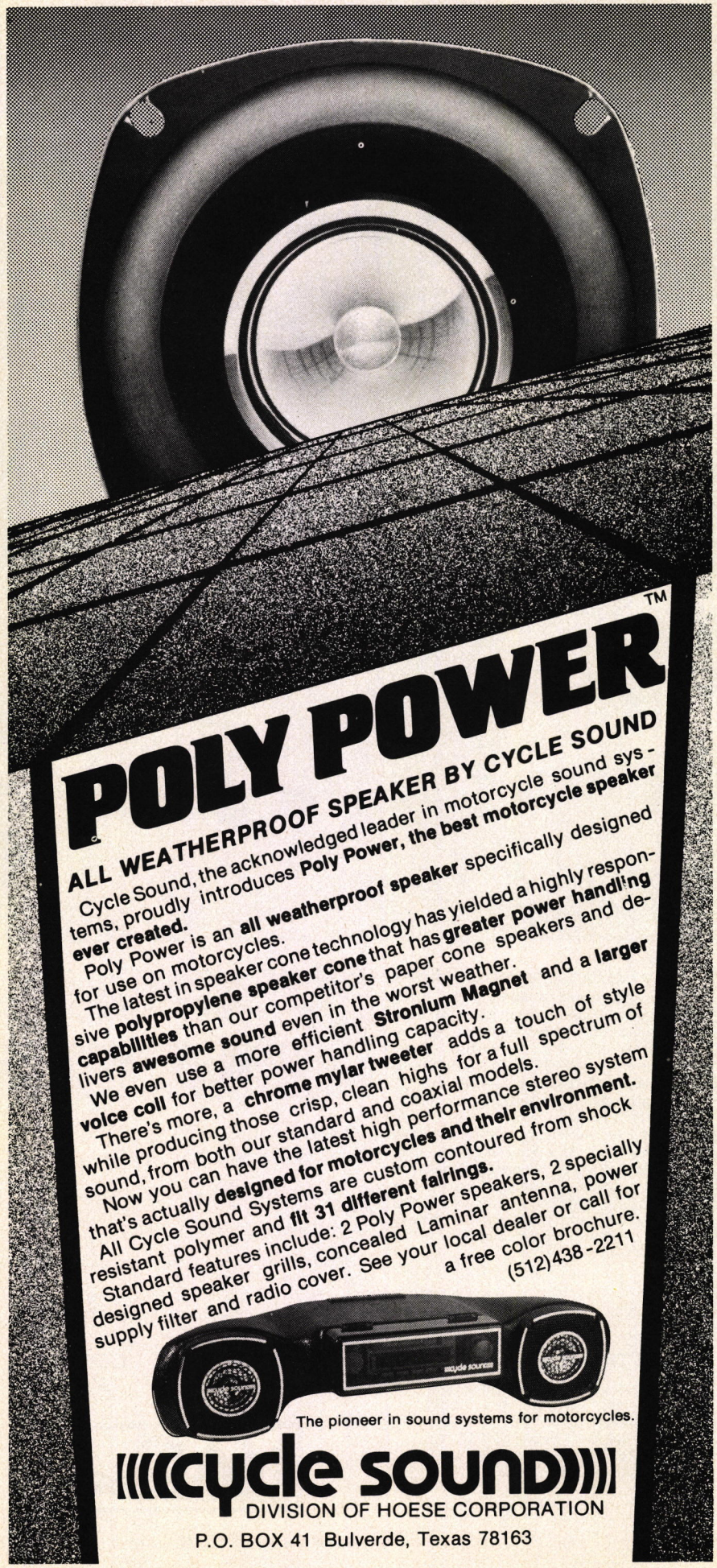

Cyril Neveu leaves Paris

Beginning a 7000-mile journey.

Vassard appeared to confirm the rumors when he said, "This was the last year for the single-cylinder engine."

And Honda seems determined to beat BMW, no matter what the cost. This year Honda's support efforts included a DC-3 transport plane; when a team-bike was disabled, parts were flown in, so little time was wasted waiting for spares. But BMW is willing to pay the price, too: The Germans were rumored to have spent in excess of $350,000 for this year's three-bike team.

BMW's guppy-tank 980cc boxer-twin

The open terrain suited the liter bike.

Continued

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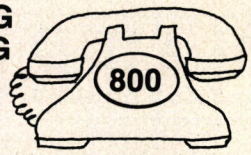

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K291-T TOURING ELITE

MT90H16	REAR	$76.75
MU90H16	REAR	83.75
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100/90H19	FRONT	45.50
120/90H16	REAR	44.50
130/90H16	REAR	56.00
140/90H16	REAR	58.00
130/90H17	REAR	56.50
120/90H18	REAR	53.00
130/90H18	REAR	57.00

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90/90H19	FRONT	34.00
100/90H19	FRONT	40.00
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120/90S16	REAR	32.50
130/90H16	REAR	53.00
110/90S17	REAR	33.00
450H17	REAR	54.00
510H17	REAR	38.50
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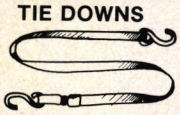

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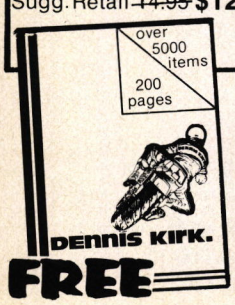

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K112 TWINS

MT90H16	REAR	$61.75
450H17	REAR	57.75
350H18	REAR	48.75
400H18	REAR	51.75
425/85H18	REAR	53.75
120/90H18	REAR	53.75

RB-2 TWINS

325H18	FRONT	$41.75
350H18	FRONT	46.75
325H19	FRONT	47.75
350H19	FRONT	49.75

TK44 SUPERTWINS

120/90V16	REAR	$63.75
130/90V16	REAR	75.75
130/90V16	RWL	84.75
130/90V17	REAR	70.75
130/90V17	RWL	82.75
400V18	REAR	63.75
425/85V18	REAR	65.75
130/90V18	REAR	65.75

TK22 SUPERTWINS

110/90V18	FRONT	$56.75
325V19	FRONT	57.75
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100/90H19	BW	46.75
100/90H19	RWL	49.75
110/90H19	BW	49.75
110/90H19	RWL	51.75

MAG MOPUS-REAR

130/90H16	BW	$51.75
130/90H16	RWL	53.75
140/90H16	RWL	59.75
130/90H17	BW	53.75
130/90H17	RWL	56.75
110/90H18	BW	51.75
425/85H18	BW	51.75
120/90H18	BW	53.75
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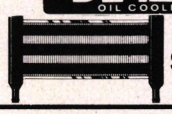
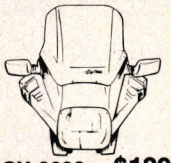


$74.50

TRACY



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TRACY 2001	179.50
VORTEX	329.50

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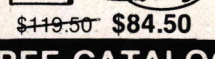

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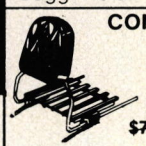

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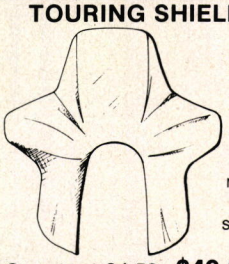

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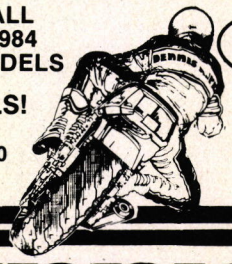

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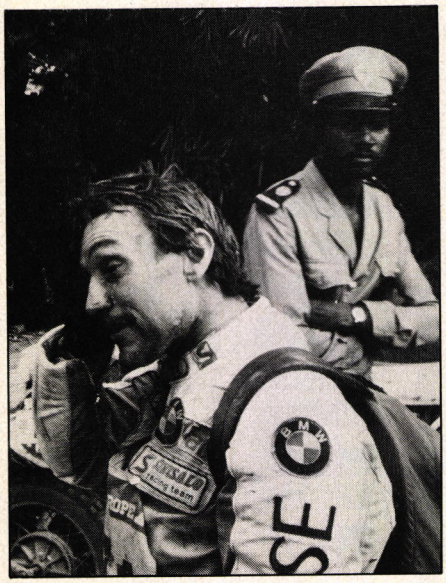

Rally-winner, Gaston Rahier

The former motocross champ wins.

The prize appears to be worth the cost to Honda and Yamaha, as well as BMW. At stake is the European off-road market—small by comparison with that in the United States, but still significant. And winning the Paris-to-Dakar, a rally that begins January 1 in Paris, France, is considered to be an effective way to stimulate sales for the rest of the year. Enough so, anyway, to justify racing for three weeks in Africa. —*Dain Gingerelli*

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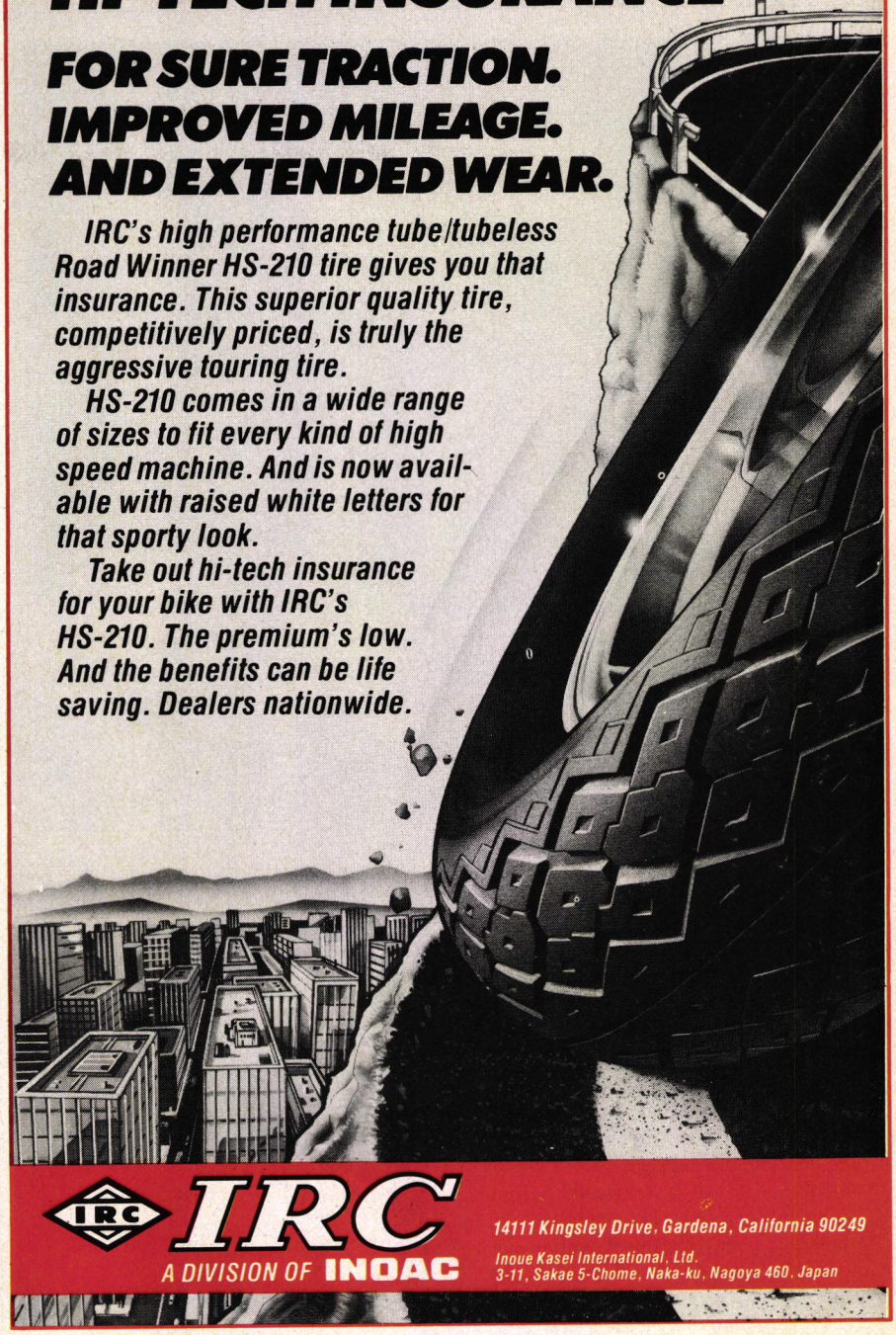

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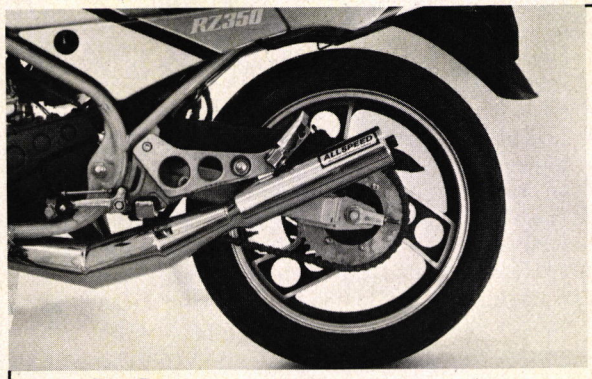

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Pit Bits

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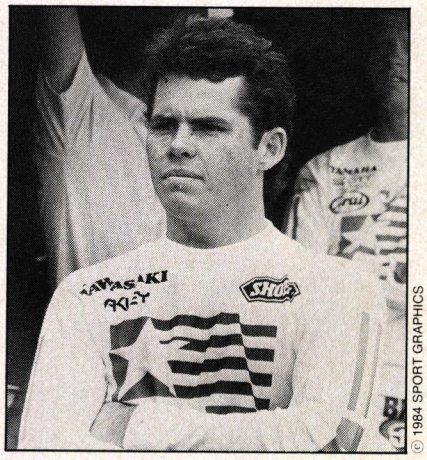
Johnny O'Mara picked up $25,000 for 20 laps of work

Wrangler put up the cash, and Johnny O took it.

• Wrangler Dash cash: Johnny O'Mara picked up $35,000 for 20 laps of work in the first-ever Wrangler Dash at Seattle, Washington, on February 12. O'Mara put his Honda CR250R into the lead on lap six, when Jeff Ward fell. And that fall turned out to be an expensive one: Had Ward gone on to win at Seattle, he would have taken home $40,000, including contingency money.

• Coke is it: All it takes for a professional motocross racer to win $1000 from the Coca-Cola Bottling Company is to wear a Coke emblem while making the longest jump at a Wrangler Super Series race. And Canadian Ross Pederson had a Coke and a smile after jumping 55 feet—farther than anyone else—at the Anaheim season opener on January 28.

• Yanks at Manx: The Isle of Man Tourist Trophy is perhaps the oldest motorcycle race still in existence. And while the once-a-year TT races are dominated by English riders, several Americans have had impressive rides on the Manx course during the past 77 years. According to the TT Press Office, 131 U.S. riders have competed there since the first race in 1907. The best result was turned in by W.H. Wells, who finished second in the vee-twin class in 1907, the first year of the TT. Perhaps the most notable ride by an American was Pat Hennen's record-setting lap 70 years later.



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Jeff Ward crashed on lap six

It cost him $40,000.

• Down by the Riverside: The list of recently closed racetracks in Southern California is growing. It began with Lions Drag Strip in the early Seventies, then Irwindale and Ontario closed up shop; Orange County International Raceway was next in line. And soon to be added to the list is Riverside International Raceway (RIR). According to RIR

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130/90H-16 A RWL	74.74
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120/90V-17 A	63.22
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M130/80-18 A	72.27

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110/90H-18	53.89
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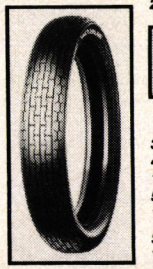

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ME99 ME77

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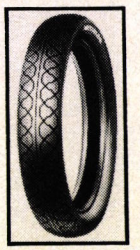

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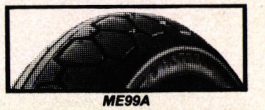

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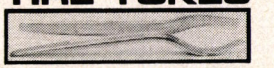

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K112 4.00H18	56.18
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RB2 3.50H18	45.25
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We all grow attached to certain things we've had a long time—a great pair of old shoes, a favorite jacket, even an old bike. They never seem to wear out, at least until they are thoroughly decrepit or they break. Something as personal as a helmet you have had for years can be difficult to part with, but it takes an accident to find out that it is worn out—it may be too late then. Modern technology has made the new helmets far superior to that one you may still be wearing. It belongs on the shelf, if you really feel you can't part with it. Helmets aren't made like they used to be—they are far better today. If it's time for a change, do it now. It's not the kind of head trip you will want to take if you find out too late that the old hat can't perform the job it was designed to do a long time ago.

A public safety message from the Safety Helmet Council of America

Pit Bits

officials, the complex will continue operation for several more years, but racing will be suspended there when a new site is selected. Riverside's current facility, says RIR board chairman Fritz Duda, is too small, and the surrounding community doesn't have adequate hotel facilities to accommodate the large crowds the racing attracts.

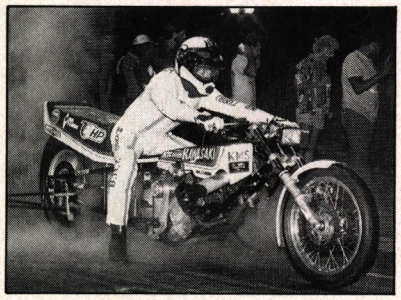
• The New Riverside Raceway: Although no plans have been drawn up for the new track, RIR officials have said the complex will have a roadrace course, an oval, and possibly a dragstrip.

© 1984 PATRICK BEHAR

Honda's Mark Weixeldorfer

He'll be taking orders from Ogilvie.

• Ogilvie of off-road fame: Bruce Ogilvie, who has competed in practically every form of off-road racing in America, turned in his riding gear to become team manager for American Honda's ATV team. Ogilvie replaces Wess McCoy, who continues to wear Honda's red, white and blue, as a team administrator.



Bo O'Brochta won Top Fuel

One of three Kawasaki titles.

• Harley hogs the show: In case you think Harley-Davidsons are made only for flattrack racing and boulevard cruising, check the 1983 Dragbike! class champions. Of the 10 professional Dragbike! classes, four were won by Har-

ley-Davidson-powered motorcycles. The second-highest number of classes won by a single marque went to Kawasaki (three), followed by Suzuki (two) and Honda (one).

• Honda money: While Honda-powered bikes won only one Dragbike! championship last season, things look more promising for the world's largest motorcycle manufacturer in NMRA dragracing this year. Honda has posted $175,425 in contingency money for winners and runners-up riding Hondas in the following NMRA classes: Top Fuel, Funny Bike, Pro Stock, Pro Comp, Modified Stock and Super Eliminator.

• No more Pontiac TT: The AMA cancelled the Pontiac TT at the Silverdome in Michigan. According to AMA officials, conflicts with the National Football League calendar led to scratching the race. The final race of the Camel Pro Series will be the Springfield Mile, in Illinois on October 13.

• Ten-year-old dinosaur: Yamaha celebrates the 10-year anniversary of its TZ700/750 this year. One decade ago, 15-time World Champion Giacomo Agostini won the Daytona 200 with his twin-shock TZ700.

• Draft on tap: Money might not have been the only reason 1982 AMA Grand National Champion Ricky Graham signed with Honda this year. According to Graham, the Honda vee-twins were faster down the straights than his Harley-Davidson XR750 was last season, "I felt like the Hondas drafted me better than I drafted them. They seemed to have more top-end than my Harley," Graham said before the 1984 season. "I guess I'll find out real soon."

—Dain Gingerelli

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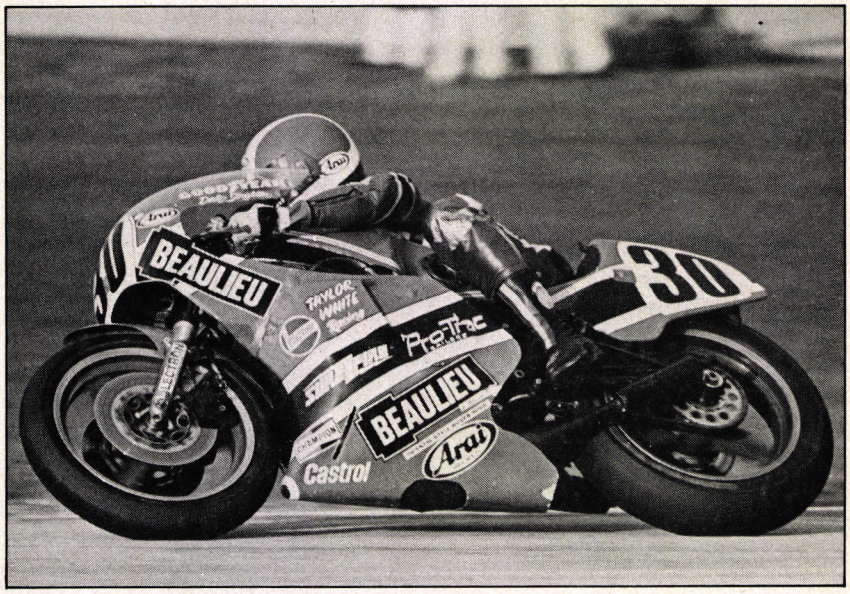

Yamaha's dinosaur rolls on into the Eighties

Dale Singleton won two Daytona 200s with the four-cylinder two-stroke.

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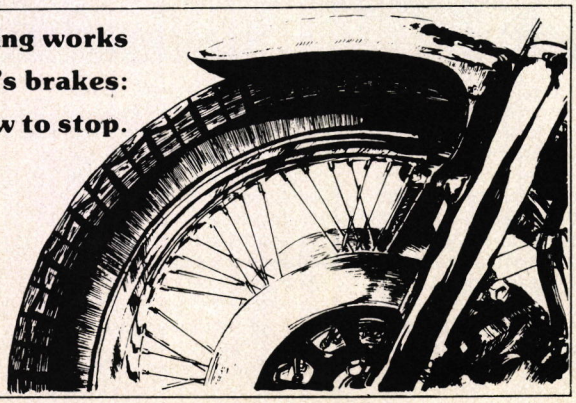


AMA
American Motorcyclist Association,
P.O. Box 141, Westerville, Ohio 43081

FLATTRACKING:

Singles Only

The AMA swings with four-stroke.

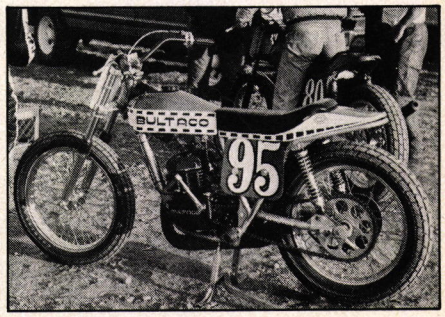
Four-stroke 500s crowd the two-stroke out

The racers don't mind one bit.

• Four-strokes are better than two. At least that's how the AMA now figures it for shorttrack racing. For years, the 250cc two-stroke was the only engine allowed for Expert-class shorttrack racing. But now, the 500cc four-stroke has entered the class, and it appears that shortrack racing will never be the same.

The rule change came about for a reason any racer understands, too: cost. Prior to the change an AMA racer needed two bikes to maintain the shorttrack and TT portions of his racing program—a 250cc two-stroke for shorttrack racing, and a large-bore four-stroke for TT. But now, a rider could conceivably use the same bike for shorttrack and TT racing.

Initially, the new rule created additional complications for some teams before the season opener at Houston last February. Since the 500s had yet to race against the two-strokes, Expert-class riders were undecided about using them at the Astrodome; 20 valuable Camel Pro Series points were at stake. Honda's Udo Gietl, who is responsible for race-engine R&D at Honda, was undecided about whether to use new 500s for team riders Bubba Shobert and Ricky Graham, or to stick with the 250, the bike that



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A typical 250 two-stroke shorttrack bike

Suddenly it's obsolete.

Continued

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- ☐ A race-bred dirt machine with new adjustable Uni-Trak® Suspension.
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- ☐ Incredible.
- ☐ An all-new Kawasaki with detachable aluminum rear frame section.
- ☐ Two bikes for one low price.
- ☐ For me.
- ☐ All of the above.

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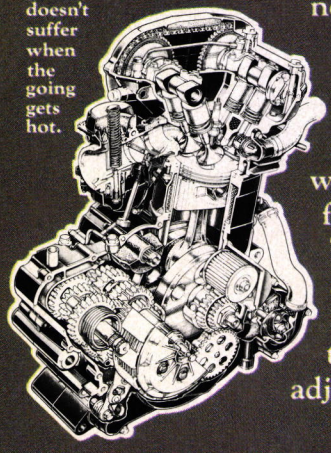
New liquid-cooling ensures performance that doesn't suffer when the going gets hot.



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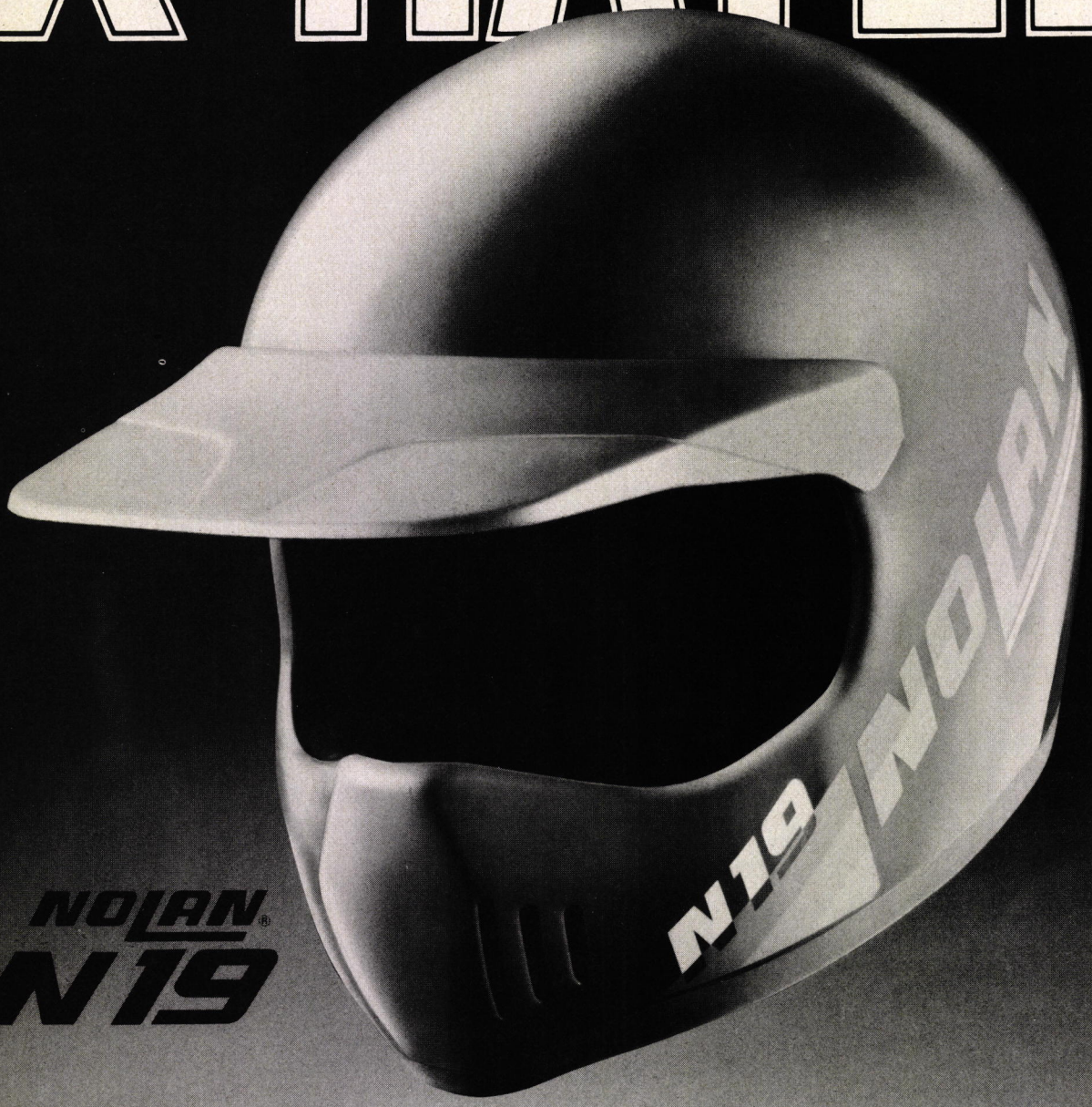

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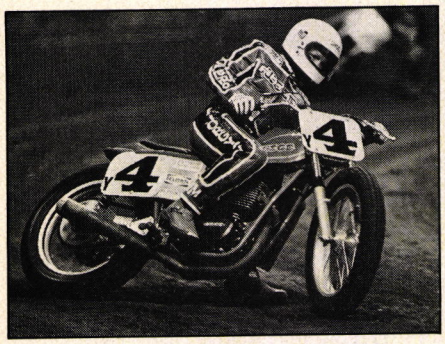

The rough Houston track favored the 500s

Four-stroke tractability was the answer.

won Houston last year. Gietl said before Houston, "We're not sure which will work, so we're going to Houston with both."

But after all the qualifying heats had been run, it was obvious that the two-stroke was no match for the 500. In fact, the only two-stroke rider to make the Main was last year's race winner, Terry Poovey. And after the track surface deteriorated during the 25-lap race, the conditions favored the more tractable four-stroke bikes even more. The disadvantage dropped Poovey from third-place to eighth.

Poovey's mid-pack finish might have saved the AMA from another dilemma, too, that of deciding what to do with the 250cc two-stroke altogether. There has been talk in Westerville, Ohio, of phasing out the two-strokes, but immediate dominance by the half-liter thumper engines might already have decided that. As Boyce said after Houston, "I rather imagine the 500s are here to stay."

Most of the racers, including Houston shorttrack winner Randy Goss, don't mind that a bit. As Goss said after his win, "It's (four-stroke engine rule) good for spectators, because there's close racing. Plus, I think they like the sounds. They don't like them ringy-dingies." —*Dain Gingerelli*

Spectators like the four-strokes

"They don't like them ringy-dingies."

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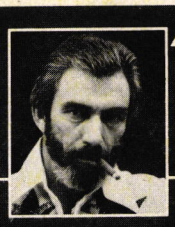

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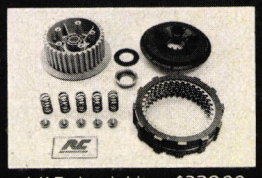

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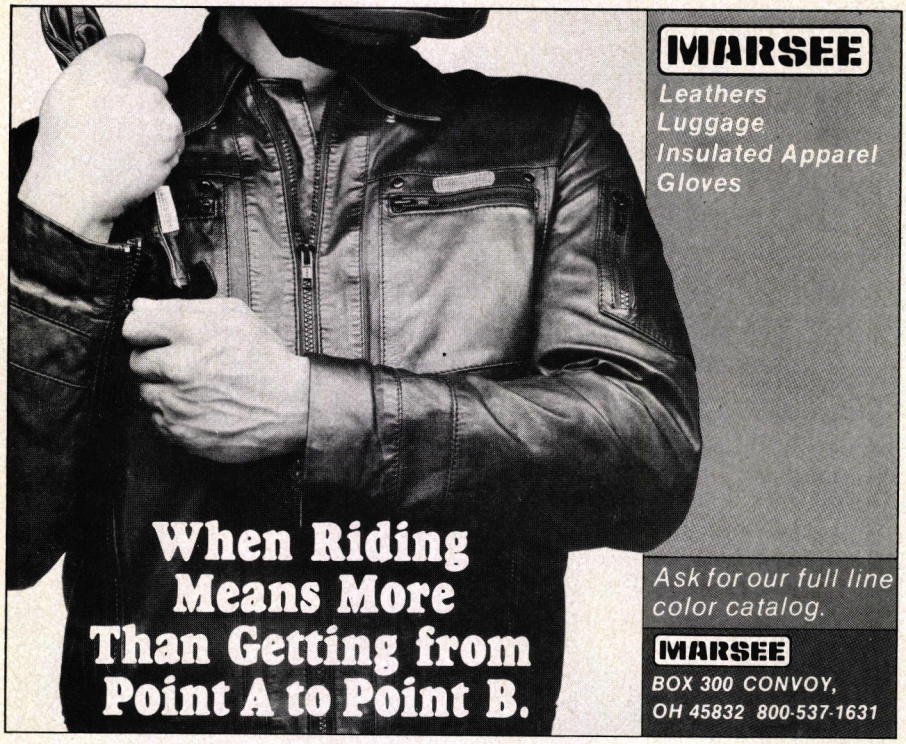

Responsible drinking works like your bike's brakes:
You have to know how to stop. And when.

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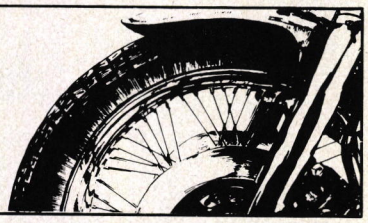

Head Trip

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A public safety message from the Safety Helmet Council of America

SAFETY HELMET COUNCIL OF AMERICA
SHCA

Winners & Losers

A Change Of Seasons

No one can smoke the whole pack in the Camel Pro Series.

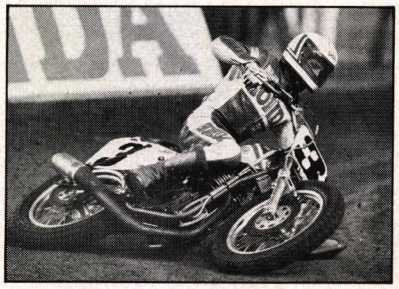
PHOTOGRAPHY © 1984 DAVID DEWHURST

Randy Goss was ready for Houston

He had a plan, and it worked.

• It's been said the more things change, the more they stay the same. If that bromide applies to any form of racing, it's true of the the AMA Camel Pro Series. To be sure, there have been several changes for 1984: After two years, Randy Goss again is racing behind the No. 1 plate, and the AMA has instituted a 500cc shorttrack engine-displacement limit. And although the Harley-Davidson factory team has maintained a pat hand for 1984 (consisting of riders Goss, Jay Springsteen and Scott Parker), Honda has changed its cards, and drawn a pair of aces in Ricky Graham and Bubba Shobert to pilot the improved air-cooled RS750 vee-twins.

But one thing that hasn't changed since last year is the points battle between Goss and Graham. Goss took the season-opener shorttrack win at Hous-



Graham won his second race for Honda

He was fourth the previous night.

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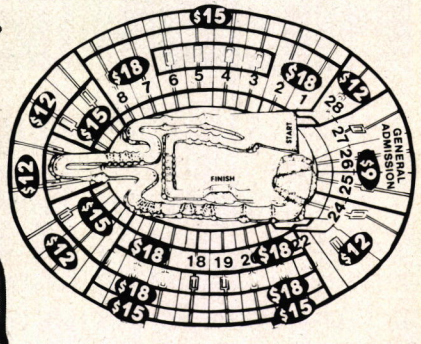

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Winners & Losers

ton, where Graham finished fourth. The two reversed their positions for the Astrodome TT, which put them in a tie for the CPS points lead.

Goss approached Houston much like he did all of 1983's races, with an emphasis on practicality. He planned to race the same H-D 500R for both weekend events, so he could concentrate on riding, rather than having to prepare two different bikes. "Brent (Thompson, his mechanic) and I went to Houston with a plan," said Goss after the doubleheader. "We stuck to it, and it worked."

But it was Goss' win in the shorttrack race that caught everyone's attention. Prior to 1984, the soft-spoken rider from Michigan had earned two championships and a reputation for being a plugger, gaining points through consistent, rather than aggressive, riding. So when Goss passed two-time Houston shorttrack winner Springsteen for the lead, people started talking about the new Randy Goss. Even Goss commented about his pass on Springer: "You're doing something right when you do that."

If a new Randy Goss emerged from

Graham and Goss might lead in points, but dozens of other riders are right behind them

The Camel Pro Series is never easy; that never changes.

Houston, Graham was well aware of it, too. In previous years, Goss had raced his XR750 at Houston, with little success, but the combination of Goss' aggressive riding and the 500R was tough competition. "Randy was serious," said Graham after winning the TT. "The 500 gave him an advantage."

Graham left Texas grateful for the 31 points, but he knew the all-important summertime Miles and Half-Miles were still to come. He cautiously added, "You can never tell about Houston. Some guys go there (and win), and then don't do

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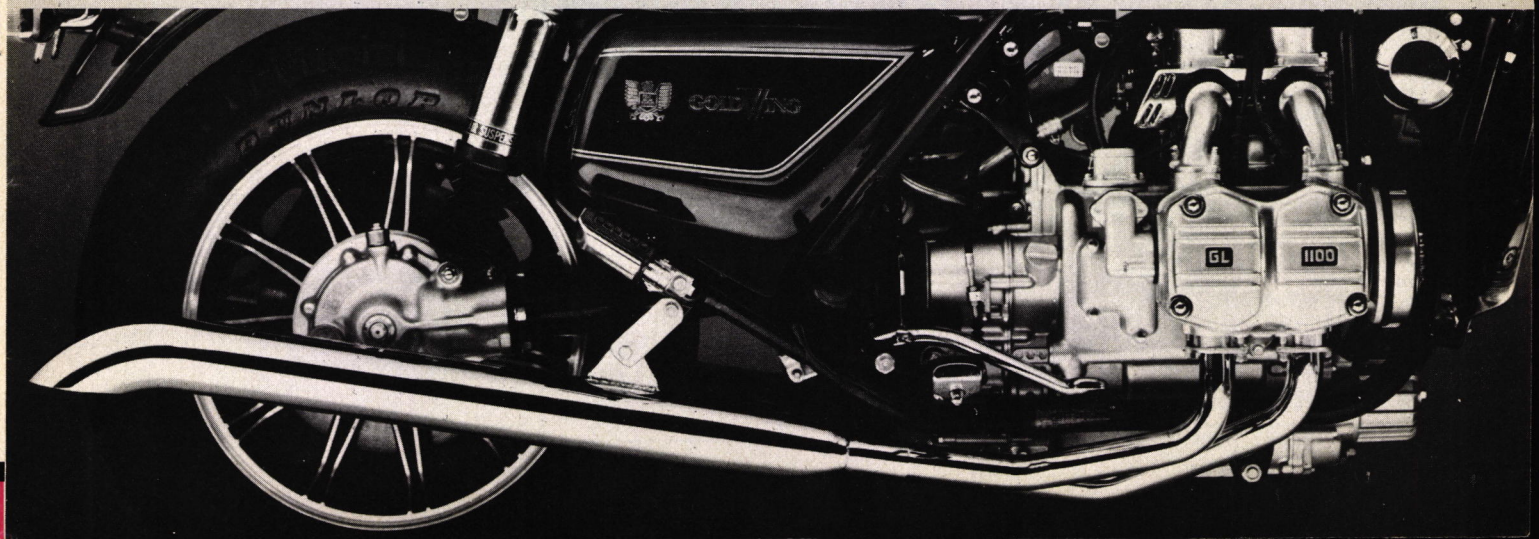

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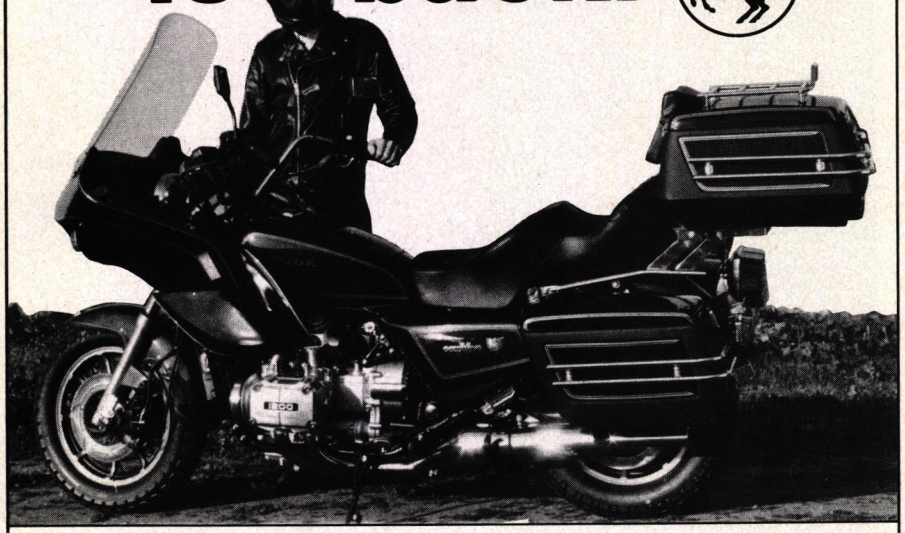

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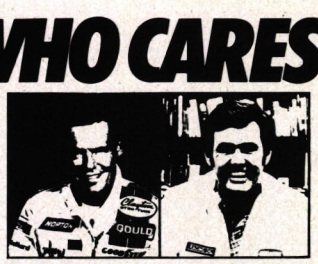

Bobby and Al Unser, race car drivers and motorcyclists. *"On the race track, we're both in total control. We approach off-road riding the same way. Reckless riding is stupid. And not very impressive to the hikers and campers we meet."*

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Winners & Losers

well the rest of the season."

And with a view toward the rest of the season, Graham announced that he is ready to go roadracing. This change might seem a bit out of character for the hard-charging Graham, because he knows he has little chance of winning a roadrace. But after the close points battles of the last few years, Graham knows that any pavement-earned CPS points could be critical at season's end. Before he's able to garner those precious points, however, Graham must convince his new employer, American Honda, that the roadrace project would be worthwhile. Graham was hired to race on the dirt, but he thinks Honda will support his roadrace plans, and said several people at Honda were "pumped" about his TT win. Enough so that race-department manager Toshiro Ketsuka congratulated Graham after the Houston win, and said to him in victory circle, "Daytona, next race; more points." Graham interpreted that as meaning there would be, as predicted earlier this year, an Interceptor-based Formula 1 ride for him.

But roadracing is an option Goss won't have; he will have to sit out the eight roadraces on the CPS calendar. "Harley tried to get outside sponsorship for a roadrace team," he said, "but it fell through. I'm not too disappointed; I don't know the first thing about roadracing."

Goss' reluctance to roadrace isn't surprising, either. Goss is a calculating racer, one who looks at the entire season, not just individual races. A crash on asphalt, he says, could jeopardize his dirttrack program, possibly sidelining him for the season. The risk of crashing, he says, seems greater in roadracing than on the dirt. "Look at Springer," he said. "He went to three roadraces last year, and was on the ground four times."

Graham doesn't view roadracing in the same way, and figures the possibility of picking up points outweighs the risks. As he figures it, a crash on dirt could be as disastrous to a rider as a fall on the hard pavement. "Racing itself is chancy," he says.

It might seem that these two riders have changed, but they really haven't. Goss has a rekindled desire to win, but knows he must also be as consistent as he was last year to retain The Plate. As for Graham, he's willing to accept roadracing's bonus points but knows that nothing in racing—in any form—comes easy. That's especially true for the AMA Camel Pro Series. And that probably will never change.

—Dain Gingerelli ●

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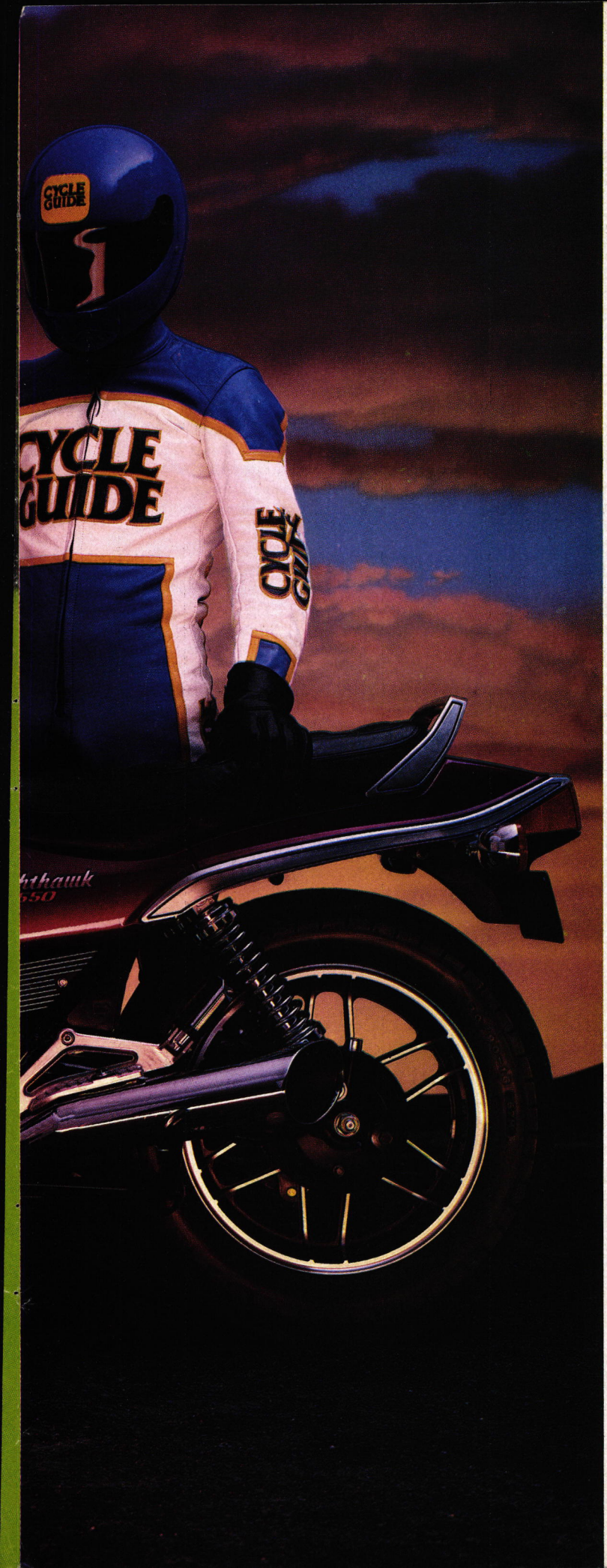

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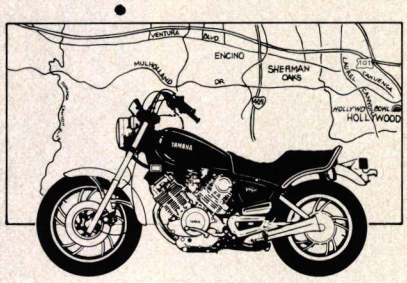
Regarding your "Shootout on the Superslab" (March 1984 issue): How does the Yamaha Venture, with the fastest acceleration, highest top speed, best braking, best handling, second-best gas mileage, second-best cruising range and longest warranty get to be second to the Honda Goldwing, with the second-fastest acceleration, second-fastest top speed, second-best handling, third-best gas mileage, fourth-best cruising range and average warranty? Did I miss something somewhere?

J.B. Spofford
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

You certainly found the specifications page. Perhaps you missed the test—ed.

CASH AND CARRY?

I own a Yamaha Venture Royale, so I was very interested in the touring comparison in your March issue. On the cover, you note that "Four are Great; One is Awesome." One is awesome all right, but it isn't the Honda. You criticize the Yamaha's cruise-control, but the Honda doesn't even have one. You



don't like the Yamaha's plasic sidecovers, yet you didn't mention the Honda's antiquated tubular handlebar. The Yamaha has better gas mileage, a longer cruising range, better stopping, better handling, a longer warranty and better luggage. The detachable luggage on the Yamaha might be difficult to install in the dark, but I'll bet it's easier to install than the Honda's. You like the Honda's luggage because it can handle a larger payload—like the money Honda paid you for the test.

Mike Turner
Bristol, Tennessee

If you ask him nicely, maybe Spofford will read the test to you—ed.

COMPLETE AGREEMENT

Without a doubt the "Big-Rig Shootout" was one of the finest comparion tests I've ever seen in any cycle publication . . . kudos to all of the writers and testers for a job well done. There are a few chosen motorcycle testers who get to ride all the new wheels. There are even fewer average cyclists who have the opportunity to throw a leg over the latest machinery. As the owner of Two Wheelers Only, a resort for motorcyclists, I have had the opportunity to ride all four of the bikes you tested, and would rate them exactly the way you did. I was impressed with the Venture when it first hit the touring scene, but the 1984 Gold Wing is a superior machine overall. I've ridden all previous versions of the 'Wing, and this year's model stands head and shoulders above the others. The '84 Aspencade is an amazing piece of machinery and deserves the title "King of the Big Rigs."

Frank L. Cheek
Suches, Georgia

Do you think someone could give Turner a ride?—ed.

Continued

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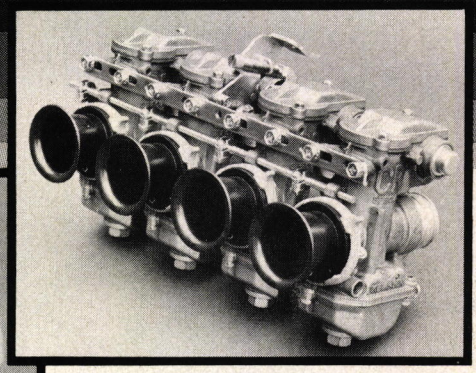

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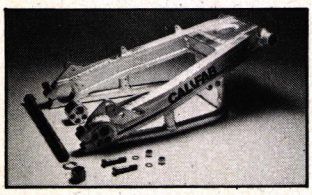

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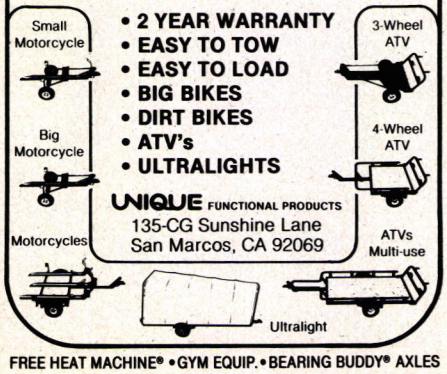

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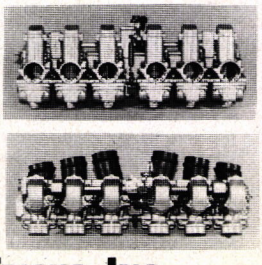

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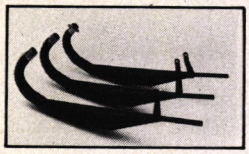

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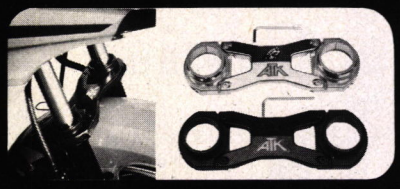

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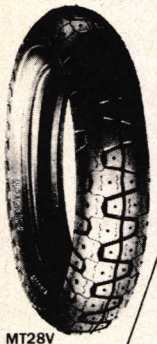

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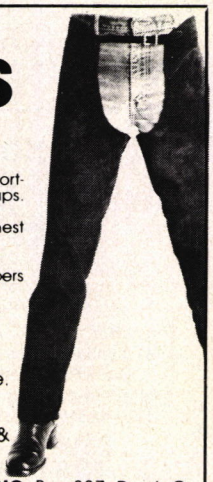

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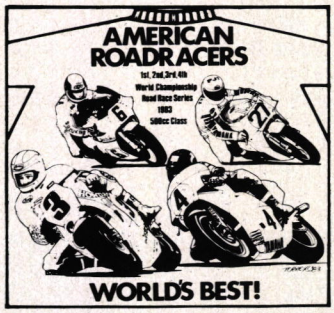

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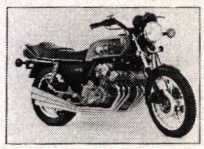

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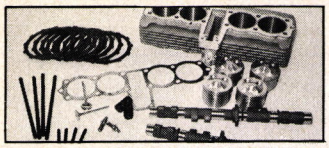

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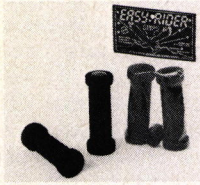

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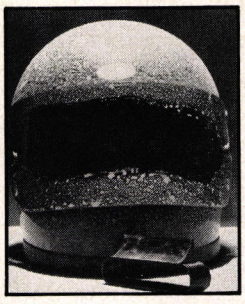

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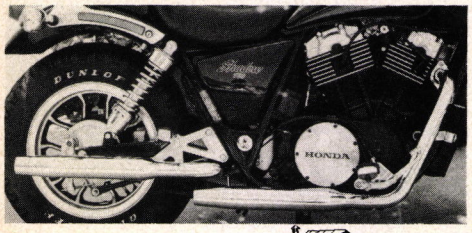

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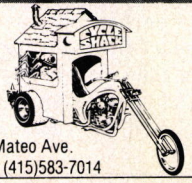

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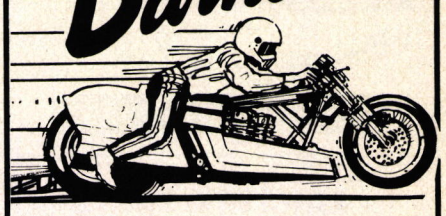

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LETTERS

OUT OF REACH

Here I sit next to my Kero-Sun heater, trying to warm up with thoughts of motorcycles and spring. Sitting down to read the March issue of CYCLE GUIDE, I find that there's not a motorcycle tested with a retail price less than $6900. I ask you, these motorcycles are beautiful—even the new Harley—but why get my blood pressure up when all I have is a $900 750 Triumph sitting in the garage? Please, next month, test a group of low-priced bikes.

Rob Brock
Louisville, Kentucky

You know of a group of low-priced, '84-model, large-displacement bikes? Show us where they are and you won't have to wait until next month—ed.

I would like to know when your magazine is going to cover such motorcycles as the East German 250 MZ or 250 Simsom Schul, a Czechoslovakian 250 or 350 Jawa, or a Russian 750 Ural? If these are too difficult, how about a Brazilian Amazonas?

Emeric Csontos
New York, New York

If you missed the Ural, you probably didn't see the Yangtse 750, either. And those were harder than an Amazonas?—ed.

NOVEL IDEA

In reference to your comments about Kenny Roberts promoting the sport of motorcycling, ("Winners and Losers" April 1984 issue): Maybe he could assemble several of the world's best motocrossers, dirttrackers, and roadracers and have them race on a track composed of surfaces appropriate to their various talents. Maybe he could arrange for coverage suitable to great racers and a great race. He could have cameras covering as much of the racing as possible, with knowledgeable commentators and an air time of say, 60 minutes. If he could do that—or even come close—he would truly help "make motorcycle racing in America a respectable sport."

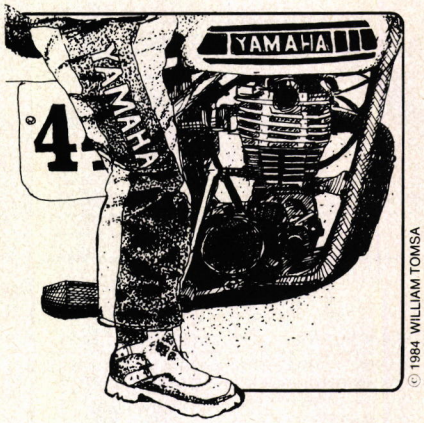
As it is, the presentation by the Albanian Broadcasting Corporation is little more than an irrelevant filler to the Albanian Goat Wresting Championship.

John Stanford
Pocatello, Idaho

LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT STUFF

Like Steve Thompson, I have been looking for the "Right Stuff for Summer" (April 1984), something that will offer protection and comfort. My MX jersey was not enough when I took a spill last summer. This is too obvious a gap in the marketplace. I just hope the man from Pittsburg isn't a procrastinator—for the sake of those like him who value not only comfort, but safety and protection.

Mark A. Olsen
Bonair, Georgia



BECAUSE TOO MUCH IS NEVER ENOUGH

I have purchased a new Kawasaki Turbo, and I don't want to get caught short come horsepower time. Several of the new superbikes appear to have equal or slightly better performance. Is there any way I can alter the wastegate on the turbo to get another 15-20 horsepower?

C. Yates
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Canada

Why don't you forget motorcycles and look into a good, used rocket sled?—ed.

HP H-D

As spokesman for the California CCCS (Clip-ons, Cafes and Coffee Society) I want to salute the decision by the California Highway Patrol to purchase 120 new Harley-Davidson motorcycles. This is one governmental decision that bodes well for all. No longer will patrolmen be forced to risk their lives in dangerous high-speed chases. The fiscal savings overcome the initial high cost per unit, (with two-thirds of the bikes usually out of service at any one time, fuel and man-hour costs will drop substantially) and with fewer speeding tickets being written, the caseloads in our courts will drop dramatically.

We rejoice in the thought that the legislature has ceded us once again the freedom of the roads for our Sunday morning rides. It's heartening to know that once more, ignorance, political corruption and the American Way have served

LETTERS

the public well.

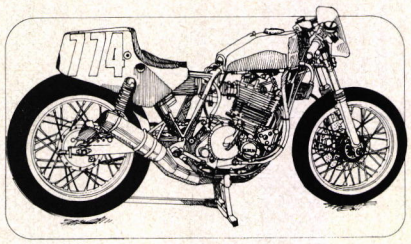
Realizing the frustrations that might arise by Harley-bound officers, the CCCS is forming a legal-defense fund for moped, Yamahopper and Chappie riders who might suffer any police harassment. If you have or know of anyone who has had any problems of this kind, please feel free to contact us.

Charles Schiele Jr.
Redwood City, California

Now, if you can only figure out how to outrun the Motorola—ed.

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE PARANOID....

When I first began riding motorcycles nine years ago, I really didn't complain when those sophisticated traffic-sensors couldn't detect the presence of my 500-pound man/machine in a left-turn lane. Sometime later, I made do when motorcycles were first included in the odd/even gas-rationing program. And when motorcycles weren't allowed in the carpool bypass lanes in Southern California, I grumbled a bit but carried on. Even when motorcycles were denied access to certain highways, expressways and parks throughout the country, and New York threatened to outlaw motorcycles from city streets after dark, I wasn't too perturbed. After all, I hadn't been threatened with bodily harm—until now.



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Currently there is a good deal of road construction going on in the L.A. area, and some of the techniques used have a high disaster potential. Imagine arriving speedily at your daily freeway off-ramp, only to find it quite neatly covered from end to end with sand. Secondly, night construction crews are repairing portions of local freeways—one lane at a time. My daily commutes have become quite exciting lately, as changing lanes now requires a running start across three lanes to climb the 3-inch-high berm that forms the boundary between the third and fourth lanes. Images of multi-million dollar lawsuits come to mind.

All I'm asking for is a little common sense, a little consideration for us motorcyclists. But my real regret is that the people who should read this complaint probably never will.

Christopher Kobel
Torrance, California

That depends on where you send your complaint, but this kind of bureaucratic stupidity goes on in every city—ed. ●

All letters must include the writer's name and address. Letters will be edited for length. Due to the volume of mail received, we regret that we are unable to give personal responses.

Questions or comments? You can talk with the CYCLE GUIDE staff by calling (213) 328-5700. Phones will be answered Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Pacific Standard Time.

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Calafia . . . 110
Calif. Superbike School . . . 118
Capital Cycle Corp. . . . 56
Carl's Honda . . . 118
Carlisle Tire & Rubber Co. . . . 77,79
Champion Moriwaki USA . . . 118
Comp. Access . . . 16-17
Competition Chemicals, Inc. . . . 122
Cosmopolitan Motors Inc. . . . 6,117
C & S Discount Center . . . 117
Cycle Kamp Inc. . . . 117
Cycle Needs . . . 118
Cycle Shack Inc. . . . 119
Cycle Sound Systems . . . 94
Cycle Sports & Service . . . 120
Denver Used M/C Parts . . . 116
Derale Oil Coolers . . . 119
Discount World . . . 117
Dunlop Tire & Rubber Corp. . . . 62-63
Dyna Tour . . . 9,104
Eagle Fireworks . . . 115
Eastern Cycle Salvage, Inc. . . . 120
Easy Rider Grips . . . 119
Eclipse, Inc. . . . 59
Esprit . . . 100
Ex-Aero . . . 118
Expert Cycle . . . 116
F-I Mufflers . . . 55
Factory Pipe Products . . . 115
Arthur Fulmer Co. . . . 95
Ghibli Helmets . . . 60-61
GSM . . . 121
Harley-Davidson Motor Co. Inc. . . . 12-13
Torrey J. Heeb Design & Ill. . . . 118
Hot Bike Eng. . . . 116,118
IB CO Int'l. . . . 119
IRC/Inoue Rubber Co. . . . 97
Jardine Header Co. . . . 109
Jet Distributing . . . 120
Johar of California . . . 102
Kawasaki Motor Corp. . . . 73,103
Dennis Kirk . . . 96
Koni America, Inc. . . . 11
KV Products . . . 115
Land Tool Co. . . . 5
Leisure Wheels of Moose Jaw . . . 118
Lockhart Ind. . . . 115,117
MAC Products . . . 93
M.A.P. Cycle Ent. . . . 115
Marsee . . . 106
M.C.S. . . . 120
Midwest Action Cycle . . . 119
Mike's Cycle . . . 119
Moore's Cycle Supply . . . 119
Motorace . . . 98-99,117
Motorcycle Books . . . 119
Motorcycle Mech. Inst. . . . 76
Motorsport . . . 117
Moto-X-Fox . . . 110
National Cycle . . . 101
Nava USA . . . 39
NEP Sales, Inc. . . . 115
Norris Cycle Products . . . 116
No. Amer. School of MC Repair . . . 56
Ontario Moto Tech Corp. . . . 114
PJ-I Corp. . . . 116
Powroll Perf. Prod. . . . 120
Pyro Sonic Devices Corp. . . . 120
Quadrifoglio, Inc. . . . 120
Qwik Products . . . 57
Racecrafters Int'l. . . . 78
Racers Supply . . . 118
Raytown Cycle Center . . . 116
RB Racing . . . 118
RC Engineering . . . 105
Rick's Tricks . . . 115
R.J. Reynolds/Camel . . . 28-29
R.J. Reynolds/Winston . . . 14
RK Chain . . . 111
RSC Performance . . . 97
Safety 4th Novelty . . . 119
Saeng Fairing . . . 105
Shoei Safety Helmet Co. . . . Cov.3
Silhoutte Fairing . . . 58
Simpson Sports . . . 76
Spectro Oils of Amer. . . . 122
Stop & Go Int'l. . . . 116
Thurlow Leatherworld . . . 116
TO Corporation . . . 118
Unique Functional Prod. . . . 115
U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp. . . . 48-49,88-89
UST Inc. . . . 52
Web-Cam Inc. . . . 118
Wirges Creative Perf. Inc. . . . 119
Wiseco Piston, Inc. . . . 56,78
Yamaha Motor Corp. . . . 50-51

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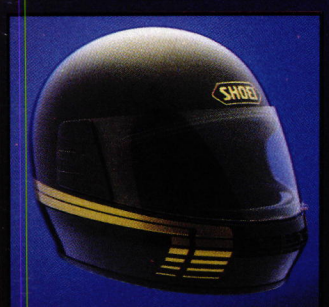

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Connecting rods are individually weighed to achieve optimum balance.

Hand-grinding removes imperfections that machines miss.

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Flaws aren't covered by paint; they're sanded out by hand.

Every BMW is individually test-ridden at speeds of up to 85 mph.

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There are no radar traps for motorcycle manufacturers. No cops lurking behind billboards ready to pull us over for building bikes too fast.

We are expected to use self-control. Something BMW seems more capable of than any other manufacturer.

Some might find our production rate downright laughable. After all, for each motorcycle BMW builds, Suzuki whisks out 46. Yamaha, 77. And Honda a hair-raising 98.

You, however, should find it reassuring that each and every BMW frame is welded entirely by hand, instead of machine. Then aligned and scrutinized by a craftsman who takes full responsibility by stamping the metal with his own seal.

Onto this steady foundation are mounted some of the most precisely-tooled components ever to grace a motorcycle. Tolerances off by as little as one-tenth of a millimeter are not tolerated.

As a BMW inches along the assembly line, it is inspected an average of once every 72 seconds. Single-part components such as pistons receive 22 separate inspections and are individually X-rayed to determine their stress value. Even the inspectors are, themselves, inspected by inspectors.

To make certain that the whole performs as soundly as its parts, each and every BMW is then individually test-ridden at speeds of up to 85 mph. A final and, to us, a crucial examination for which high-volume manufacturers simply don't find time.

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For it means the difference between becoming a motorcycle's owner. Or its test rider.

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